

GOD WITH US:

A Curricular Resource
on the Gospel of Mark

by

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ABSTRACT

This project describes the development of an alternative curricular resource for the study of the Gospel According to Mark. The author considers the specific needs which the study was designed to meet, surveys the curricular resources already available through non-denominational and denominational publishers, and determines that what is currently available does not satisfy those needs. The two major issues which the resource developed in this project addresses are (first) that the resource should be both intellectually stimulating and devotional in its presentation, and (second) that the resource should encourage students to consciously engage in the task of interpretation for themselves, developing the necessary skills.

Following that discussion, the chapter "The Scope of the Project" develops in detail the hermeneutical suppositions of the author and details the rationale for the selection of the Gospel According to Mark for the study. The major theological emphases of Mark's Gospel are considered and the choice of those particular emphases justified.

The chapter "The Design of the Curricular Model" sets out the specifics of the curricular model, its theoretical framework and the learning tasks utilized in the curricular resource. Home study guides which lead the learners through the texts to be studied are an integral part of the design, as is the setting for the actual class sessions.

Appendix A is a set of the actual study guides, Appendix B is

the leader's guide, and Appendix C is a detailed exegetical study of the Crucifixion narrative from the Gospel According to Mark.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The problem which this project confronts is the development of a curricular resource on the Gospel of Mark for use in a weekly adult Bible study in a local church. The curriculum which was developed was designed to meet certain needs not met by Bible study curricula which were available at the time. One of these needs was for a curriculum resource which was simultaneously scholarly and devotional. This resource should also encourage students to learn how to use the tools of biblical scholarship and engage in the task of hermeneutics for themselves. It is to be understood that the study which is the core of this project, while perhaps useful in a variety of settings, was initially designed to meet the particular needs of one class of men meeting weekly on an ongoing basis. Its primary concern was the communication of certain tools of analysis and interpretation to that group, and keeping that group challenged and inspired in group study of the Bible. The Gospel of Mark was chosen because its accessibility to the tools of form criticism and its direct applicability to the life situations and cultural circumstances of the members of the class suggested that it would be particularly useful as an introduction to faithful and scholarly studies of the Bible. This was in addition to its role as the first of the gospels, which was also a consideration in its use as a starting place for Bible study.

A. IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The study of the Bible is one of the most important ongoing functions of the Christian church. The Bible is foundational for the Christian faith and provides the parameters for the church's thinking about itself and about its role in the world. In recent years much has been written about the importance of the study and promulgation of the biblical texts and their application to the lives of individual Christians as well as the corporate life of the church. Even with the interest which has been expressed through the rapidly growing number of books and periodicals on the study of the Bible, and the increasing interest on the part of lay persons in the study of the Bible, there still exists a state of wide-spread biblical illiteracy among the members of our churches. Relatively few people in our congregations have more than a passing acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures.¹

1. What the problem is not.

The problem is not that individuals are disinterested in the study of the Bible. On the contrary there is in the United States a phenomenal interest in what the Scriptures have to say. The Bible continues to be the largest-selling book of all time. Sales of religious books and periodicals are not tabulated with those of 'secular' publishers because they would skew the lists of best sellers. It is only when a religious volume is available primarily through the

¹A personal observation based on the five Southern California congregations of three denominations with which I have had contact. I am unaware of any thorough study of the quality or quantity of biblical knowledge in our churches.

secular booksellers that it is indicated on the best-seller lists. There is no shortage of desire for Bible studies.

Neither is the problem that there is a shortage of books published which speak to this need. The United Methodist Church is only one of many denominations as well as non-affiliated publishing concerns which is seeking to have an impact on the wide-spread paucity of knowledge of the Bible.² Much of what is published is of high quality and employs scholars who are knowledgeable about their subjects, and spiritual leaders who have significant insights into the substance of the scriptural witness, as writers. One has only to go into any religious bookstore in any city in the United States to be confronted with shelves full of books which are designed to be used in the study of the Bible. Beside them will be found special editions of the Bible with commentary and interpretation written directly into the format so that one may have the assistance of an expert immediately available, even in private study. There is not a shortage of materials being published for Bible studies.

2. What the problem is.

The problem is really a communications problem. It results from a lack of specificity in consideration of who the audience for a given Bible study is to be. Many of the studies which are published today appear to be written for an imaginary audience; one which exists

²"United Methodists believe that every person has both the right and the responsibility to read, study, and understand the Word of God as contained in the Holy Scriptures. All United Methodist Curriculum Resources are firmly rooted and grounded in the Bible".... Adult Planbook, 1977-78 (Nashville: Graded Press, 1977), p. 13.

only in the mind of the author or editors. While some studies are written with the help of feedback mechanisms which provide information on the actual suitability of the curriculum for the audience (the United Methodist Publishing House has a variety of means for receiving information about the actual use of their materials in local churches; Curricu-phone, etc.), often they are designed for constituencies so large and diverse that the amount of adaptation which is required for a given setting is immense. Most studies seem to be written for the elusive "average student," with the result that it is a happy coincidence when they meet the needs of real persons.

This has led to an unhappy situation where many persons end up expressing doubt about the importance of the Bible, largely because they have not been able to find assistance in their personal search of Scripture. They know that they have missed something crucial, if for no other reason than that they cannot comprehend the excitement of their friends who express vigorous devotion to the study of the Bible. However, they are not certain whether the fault lies with them or with the Bible. It seldom occurs to them that the problem is in the interpreter and not in that which is interpreted. Rather, they often find themselves being assaulted by studies which are either too simplistic, demanding nothing of their intellectual faculties, or which are scholarly in the extreme, dealing with questions of biblical scholarship which seem to have only slight personal or corporate application.

It is therefore very important that we have curricular resources which are appropriate for the needs of the students. Where possible curriculum should be designed with the specific as well as general context of the learners in mind. Where this is not practicable

because the large costs of publishing demand that studies be general enough to be used by a large and unfocused audience, the curricular resources should provide clear means for adaptation to the situation in which it is to be used. This project grew out of the expressed needs of specific group of students who were involved from the beginning in the production of a curricular resource which was suitable for their situation. In that respect it is an immediate and direct response to the problem outlined here.

B. LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

This project is limited in its scope. It will not attempt to formulate a comprehensive alternative curricular theory. Neither will it attempt to forge new paths in Markan scholarship. It will seek to respond to the needs expressed by the constituents of the class for which it was designed and it will also bring the insights of modern form-critical study of the Bible to bear on the development of a curriculum resource. It will also make use of the fruit of other disciplines where it can be incorporated into that framework and still remain faithful to the original impetus for the project.

1. Design for United Methodist Curriculum

In order to put the limitations and delimitations of the project in proper perspective it will be useful to examine the design of a complete curriculum. The United Methodist Church makes use of the categories and basic structure of the Cooperative Curriculum Project's Design for the Curriculum of the Church's Educational

Ministry³ and will serve as an example of what might be included in the development of a new curriculum.

There are four major elements of a curriculum plan. They are its Objective, its Scope, its Context, and the Learning and Learning Tasks which make it operational. In addition the Cooperative Curriculum Project identifies the Organizing Principle as a dimension of the plan,⁴ but this element really represents the way the various elements relate to each other. In the United Methodist Design the Organizing Principle is developed throughout the other elements, and components of the Organizing Principle are to be found in several places.⁵ In particular the Cooperative Curriculum Project identifies the question, "How is the learner taken into account?" as a part of the Organizing Principle, while the United Methodist design incorporates most such considerations in the area of the context.⁶ In the discussion which follows all references are either to the Cooperative Curriculum Project's description of these elements or to the United Methodist expression of them found in the booklet Design for United Methodist Curriculum.

³ Cooperative Curriculum Project, The Church's Educational Ministry: A Curriculum Plan (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1965).

⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵ Design for United Methodist Curriculum (Nashville: Graded Press, 1969).

⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

2. Objective.

The first of the parts of the complete curriculum is its objective. The objective deals with the purpose of the curriculum and expresses the end toward which the curriculum is directed. It is this element which begins to put a shape upon the curriculum for it sets out what exactly is to be accomplished by the curriculum and sets a direction. In Design three functions of the objective are identified: First, it sets a direction in which the educational experiences should be planned. Second, it serves as a standard by which short-term goals and the resources and procedures necessary to implement them are selected. Third, it serves as a means of evaluating the curriculum, both on a short-term basis of evaluating partial goals and in the long run when considering the entire enterprise.⁷

This project does not seek to develop a new objective for Christian education. In fact, the objective of the United Methodist curriculum essentially encompasses this project and that objective has served to give directions to it.⁸ The concern expressed in this project that the curriculum resource here developed be both intellectually

⁷ Ibid., pp. 9 and 10.

⁸ "STATEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVE FOR UNITED METHODIST CURRICULUM
The objective of the church as manifested through its educational ministry is that all persons be aware of and grow in their understanding of God, especially of his redeeming love as revealed in Jesus Christ, and that they respond in faith and love—to the end that they may know who they are and what their human situation means, increasingly identify themselves as sons of God and members of the Christian community, live in the spirit of God in every relationship, fulfill their common discipleship in the world, and abide in the Christian hope.", Ibid., p. 11.

demanding and devotional in presentation speaks to the issues raised by the United Methodist statement of the Objective, as does the intention that the students learn to make use of the tools of biblical scholarship for themselves. Thus the first limitation of the project is that it does not intend to address the question of the objective of Christian education, except as a means of evaluating this curriculum resource.

3. Scope.

The scope of the curriculum is the range of material which may be used within the curriculum. It is not only the content of the curriculum, but is the field of material from which the content is drawn. The content of the curriculum is included in its scope. In Christian education the scope necessarily includes anything which can be considered foundational for the Christian faith, although in the exposition of the scope of a given curriculum only certain elements are emphasized. An examination of the elements of the scope of a curriculum is one way in which it is possible to determine what are important issues for the body which is designing the curriculum. It is the function of the scope to insure the comprehensiveness of the curriculum and to enunciate the critical 'issues' from which the content of the curriculum is to be drawn.

The scope of the United Methodist curriculum is "the whole field of relationships viewed in light of, or from the perspective of, the gospel (God's whole continuous creative and redemptive action known especially in Jesus Christ by virtue of which man has the

promise of a new life and hope)." ⁹ It is clear that what is central in this statement is the field of relationship, which includes all human interaction with God, other humans, and the created order. For the purpose of determining a content another part of the statement is more important: "in light of the gospel." It is this element which determines that the scope is to be Christian.

Although the statement of the scope uses the word 'gospel' to mean much more than the testimony of the Bible, it is not to be understood in any way as being something other than that testimony. The Bible is the first source for the scope of the gospel itself, and is the foundation upon which all Christian education must be built. The rest of God's 'continuous creative and redemptive action' is understood in the light of the norms established in the Bible and must be evaluated in that light. This does not mean that any curriculum is Christian simply because it makes reference to the Bible, but that any curriculum which is within the scope of Christian education will be indebted to the biblical testimony. The scope of this project is also the situation of human existence in its encounter with God's self-revelation in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The difference is that this statement is a little narrower than that of the United Methodist curriculum and is more specific about the determinative quality of the Bible itself. While the scope is broad enough to include all the dimensions of the human response to God's action, it takes pains to specify the primacy of God's initiative.

In this respect it leads toward a different set of hermeneutic

⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

assumptions and a somewhat different content from that developed under the statement of the scope of United Methodist curriculum. It might, for example, encourage an author writing a curricular resource to place a greater weight on the biblical word than on the life circumstances to which it speaks. Since the scope of the Design curriculum includes all the same elements (even if there is a different emphasis), that possibility is only a conjecture. It is only a possible difference depending on what emphasis an author of a particular curricular resource may give the material, or the context where it is used, or the special circumstances of a given class situation.

Not all of these issues will be addressed in this project. The scope of this curriculum was suggested by the choice of content some of which preceded reflection on the question of scope. For that reason the scope suggested here is more closely tied to the particular content of this curriculum resource than might be otherwise. Also, the discussion of scope and content does not make a rigorous distinction between them. It has not been though necessary to alter this situation because of the limited purposes of this project.

4. Context.

The context is that situation within which learning takes place. It answers the question, "Where does the curriculum function?" and concerns the environment of the learning process. There are two dimensions to the context of curriculum, one of which the statement in the Design for United Methodist Curriculum acknowledges. In that statement the context of the curriculum for Christian education is

"basically...the Christian community--the church."¹⁰ This includes the Christian home and the church so far as the Design is concerned. This is the first dimension of the context: the immediate circumstances of the learner--what might be called the direct or immediate context.

There is a second dimension of context which is the larger environment of human existence. It involves not only the church and home, but also the nation, the world-wide church and the entire global community. It includes the cultural, political and social systems within which learning takes place; all the conditions which effect human life. Insofar as each of these impinges upon the learning existence, they may all be considered to be a part of the context of the curriculum.

It should be obvious that it is not always possible to specify the ways in which this larger context should be taken into consideration in the development of a curricular resource. In this project it was not deemed possible to consider the larger context to any appreciable degree. It is represented to the extent that it has influenced the immediate context, which has had a substantial impact on the shape of the project. It is the consideration of the particular context of the men's morning Bible study class which initially suggested the need for an alternative curricular resource. In the chapter on standards the specific consequences of the context of the class can be seen in the guidelines which emerged from it.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

More details about this particular context may be found in the chapter which bears the title "A Design of a Curricular Model."

5. Learning and Learning Tasks.

The learning tasks are the concrete expressions of the curriculum by which the learner makes the objective of Christian education her or his own. The learning tasks reflect the theories of learning which have influenced the writers of the curriculum and the type of material to be learned. They are the parts of the curriculum with which we are all most familiar because they are the entry point of the learner into the learning process and the point at which the rest of the curricular theory impacts the learner.

In this project the learning tasks are based on assumptions that the learning process depends upon the active interaction between the learner and the curriculum. Through the use of written homework and class discussion the content of the curriculum is reinforced. Because the learning takes place in the context of a small class, meeting on a regular basis the students are pushed to deal with the significance of the material to themselves; they are forced to confront the gospel. Each of these is a part of the learning theory incorporated in the project. Specific consideration of the learning theory employed in the development of learning tasks for this project will not forge new roads but will only set out which of several methods have been chosen.

6. Summary of limitations.

We have seen in this short examination of the elements of the

curriculum that the intention of this project is limited to the design of a new curricular resource. The project will not address the questions of objective and context except to the extent that they determine the shape of the design presented here. The scope of this resource and the specifics of the learning tasks employed are the real contributions of the project, centering on the content of the curriculum resource and the means of employing it in the learning enterprise.

C. THE METHOD OF THE STUDY

The development of this project proceeds in four parts. In the first of the four parts--the Introduction--the problem has been stated, the limitations expressed in relation to the United Methodist Design for the Curriculum, and the method is here set out. The second part of the project--Standards--will be concerned with the evaluation of curricular resources already available. It will begin with an exposition of the issues raised by the members of the class for which the curriculum was designed and the guidelines suggested by that process. In this case that resulted in the statement of two major guidelines and five minor ones. The chapter will continue with an examination of first the United Methodist adult studies which were available and then resources for adult Bible study available from non-denominational publishers and independent publishers. The purpose of this chapter will be to suggest the reasons which occasioned the development of a new curriculum resource.

The third chapter--Scope--will address the question of the authority of the Bible, in particular the Gospel of Mark, for us, and will set out our understanding of Mark's purposes and three of Mark's

theological concerns. In this chapter the discussion of the scope of the study will go into some detail in looking at the supporting data in the text of the Gospel.

The fourth part of the project--the Design--will entail the development of the curricular model and will reflect on the actual use of the curriculum developed in the project. After a consideration of the characteristics of adult learners, this chapter will proceed with the guidelines for the curriculum resource derived from those characteristics in combination with the issues raised in the chapter on standards. From there it will move to the curricular theory of the project, looking at the two directions involved in the learning tasks. That will be followed by components dealing with the actual elements of the curriculum, including the structure of the curriculum and suggestions about the environment of the course and the use of the materials.

The concluding chapter will summarize the results of the project and respond to questions raised by the curricular model. It will also make suggestions for further use of this model.

This concludes the first part of the project. We have seen the problem to which the project is a response and considered its importance. From it we established the beginning point of the project itself: that it is important that curricular resources be specific to the needs of the learners. We have seen the limitations of the project, that it is primarily concerned with the development of the resource and not with the establishment of an alternative system of curricular design. We have also taken a look at the method of organization of the project and seen what the elements which comprise the

project are. We turn now to a consideration of the standards for the curriculum resource and an analysis of the Bible studies already published.

Chapter II

STANDARDS FOR CURRICULUM RESOURCES

A. Issues

This project grew out of the need of a men's early morning Bible study for a suitable curriculum resource. That beginning conditioned the issues which were raised in the search for curriculum and also the establishment of standards or guidelines for the development of this study. In practice the issues raised for the development of the new resource often arose out of dissatisfaction with one or another elements of curricular resources which were already available. In this chapter we will consider those issues raised by the constituents of the class which contributed to the shape of the curriculum. We will then consider the curricular resources which were already available from the United Methodist Publishing House and from several publishing houses not affiliated with any denomination. They will be evaluated in the light of the issues raised by the class, and the results of that evaluation will contribute to the guidelines which shall be used in developing the new study.

1. Two Major Issues

There were two issues which were foremost in the consideration of any curricular resource for this class. The first was that it would be intellectually stimulating as well as devotional in its

presentation. There was a concern that the study should not only inform the students and challenge them with the results of modern biblical scholarship, but that it also challenge them to grow in their faith and in their commitment to Jesus Christ and to his kingdom. The second issue dealt with the attitude exhibited by the resource toward the students themselves. The course should consider them capable of learning the skills and approaches necessary that they should consciously engage in the hermeneutical task for themselves, and it should encourage them to do so. Any course which was content to simply fill the students with the information available without demanding active involvement on their part would not be suitable.

These two issues were deemed to be the most important standards for use in evaluating any curricular resource which might be used by the class. They reflect the students' experiences with studies which had either been too superficial in their examination of the biblical account, or had considered the students' task to be that of receiving a body of information about the Bible or the subject of the text. Each of these issues concern the general approach of the curriculum and is influenced by the objective of the curriculum itself.

2. Five Minor Issues

In addition to the major concerns listed above there were a series of issues which emerged from the various life situations of the students and the particular skills (or lack of skills) which they felt they possessed. There are five of them, and each of them grew out of the constituency of the class and determined the type of curriculum which was to be used in the study. It was felt that a curricular

resource which did not consider them would not be able to engage the students of the class, even if the two major issues above were confronted.

Since the class was to be made up of persons who had a variety of educational backgrounds, the first recognition was that the curriculum should not presume any particular level of educational expertise beyond high school. This was balanced by the fact that the persons making up the class also included some persons with extensive educational background and any study which was condescending in its tone or presentation would be as ill-received as one which made a show of erudition.

The second issue was related to the first, because there were persons among the constituency of the class who enjoyed reading greatly and some who found it difficult to read very much at all with any degree of pleasure. The course should not expect the students to read great masses of material in addition to the text of the Bible itself, especially lengthy commentary which might not add appreciably to an understanding of the text. Even those who found reading a delight might not have the time to read much additional material on an every-week basis, or be able to predict what weeks would be free for more extensive involvement.

The third consideration was that there was a high degree of diversity in the church backgrounds of the students. Some had grown up in the church and had attended the courses of instruction available through the church school for the greater part of their lives. Others in the course had married into the Christian faith and were only now discovering what was involved in the church of Jesus Christ. Still

others had been raised in families where the church was an integral part of their lives, but they had dropped out when still young and had only a child's understanding of the beliefs and faith of the Christian church. Any study which assumed a familiarity with the words and concepts of the church, or with church history, or with the doctrines of the church would be doomed to produce considerable confusion.

The fourth sub-issue to be considered in the quest for a curriculum suitable for the class was its sensitivity to the need to be both racially and sexually inclusive. This was not a concern of all the members of the class (especially the issue of sexual inclusiveness). Some, however, considered it important enough that it was included in the list of criteria for the course of study.

Finally, the curriculum must be open to the insights of modern scholarship. The study should take seriously the discoveries of modern historical criticism and form criticism, as well as being open to whatever other scholarly information (redaction criticism, etc.) might be of use in approaching the text.

All of these issues contributed to the development of standards for the evaluation of curriculum which was already available and to the composition of the resource which is the subject of this project. Each of them reflects the experiences of the various members of the class in their encounters with diverse curricular resources, and do not represent the end of a process of research into current curricular theory. For that reason they do not constitute a comprehensive program, but rather live issues of concern within a particular setting at this time. We will place additional guidelines into consideration at the beginning of the chapter on the Design of a

Curricular Model. These will deal with other characteristics of adult learners which may influence the design. However, because those characteristics do not effect the criteria used for the evaluation of resources which were already available they will not be considered here.

B. UNITED METHODIST CURRICULAR RESOURCES

In this section we will examine the materials available for the study of the Bible by adults published by Graded Press, the curriculum-publishing arm of the United Methodist Publishing House. We have limited our examination to those resources suitable for group study because of the setting in which they were to be used. There are two Bible study resources for adult groups published by the United Methodist Church. They are Adult Bible Studies and Our Living Bible Series. It might be added that both of the resources here reviewed were already in use by other classes in the local church and that prospective members of the men's early morning Bible study class had ample opportunity to determine the suitability of these studies.

1. The Adult Bible Studies Series.

The major virtues of the Adult Bible Studies series is its international dimension, being based on a scripture plan also in use by "over six million persons."¹ There are variety of resources available for support of a class and its leaders who are using this series.

¹Adult Planbook, 1977-78 (Nashville: Graded Press, 1977), p. 15. The plan is the International Uniform Lesson Plan.

Each quarter Graded Press publishes a ninety-six page paperback booklet which contains that quarter's lessons and additional material such as artwork which aids the study. The studies are arranged in units of about two months in length, and each lesson is written so that any person who participates may gain something from it, without regard to previous biblical knowledge: "All persons, even persons with a minimal knowledge of the Bible, can understand and appreciate the lessons in Adult Bible Series."²

Each lesson contains several sections. These include such headings as "Aim of this lesson," "What is our concern," "Searching the Scripture," and "What the Scripture says to us." The major portion of the lesson is contained in "What the Scripture says to us." "Here the writer gives her or his ideas and insights about the application of the Scripture to one's daily life and faith."³

The Adult Bible Studies are strong in several areas. They are open to modern scholarship (although there seems to be only a limited use of it in the lesson), and they are avowedly devotional in their presentation. There is a consistent attempt to be racially and sexually inclusive in presentation,⁴ and a recognition of the lack of knowledge about the church and the Bible which many readers bring to the studies. There is not an excessive amount of material presented in each lesson, but the majority of the material presented takes the

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴One recent unit was illustrated solely by Asian depictions of events in Jesus' life.

form of a devotional message related to the scriptures rather than commentary or explication of the text involved.

The main impediment to the use of this series for the men's Bible study class was that it did not deal seriously enough with the biblical text itself. The text printed in the handbook for the weekly lesson is all that the student needs to be able to handle the lesson. In most cases (perhaps all) this represented only a minute portion of the text with which the lesson purports to deal. This series lacks the substance that was demanded by the students in the men's class. The lesson printed could be described as a reflection on the text rather than an encounter with it.

A second difficulty with this series was the lack of any serious attempt to engage the student in the interpretive task. The student is encouraged to find in her or his life situations to which the message of the week's lesson would apply, but not to find in the text messages which might impact his or her life. The study series seems to encourage a kind of distancing on the part of the student from the biblical text; a removing of one's self to the safe distance of perceptual analysis. The student is given the analysis of the meaning of the text and then encouraged to take the prepackaged meaning and seek applications. This was contrary to the need expressed to be given tools with which the students could learn to do their own analysis and interpretation. For those two reasons the Adult Bible Studies series was not used by the class.

2. The Our Living Bible Series.

The other adult Bible study curriculum available from Graded

Press is the Our Living Bible series. This is a series of twelve units which cover the entire Bible. If one reads the suggested readings the entire Bible may be read in the course of using this study. Each unit has thirteen chapters and each chapter is designed for use in one or more sessions. Several of the strengths of the Our Living Bible series are pointed to in the description which appears in the Adult Planbook, 1977-78:

The Our Living Bible Series is designed for all adults. It is written in non-technical language. It emphasizes the spiritual values of the Bible, and it focuses on the Bible as God speaking to the children of God today through its pages as surely as God spoke through its pages to the first century Christian church and to the Hebrews before that.⁵

Both lecture method of presentation of material, and one which incorporates a variety of teaching-learning techniques and procedures, are available in the teachers' books. Each of the student books contains an introduction to the study and the texts and commentary for the study. The actual biblical text is printed (or at least a portion of it) in boldface type and then followed by a commentary on the text. Interspersed throughout the study are examples of Christian art which relate to the text.

One problem with the Our Living Bible series is the amount of reading which is required. There is not only the texts for the lesson, but also several pages of commentary for each several-verse selection of scripture. In addition to this input, the teacher or leader of the class may present a lecture with additional comments. The amount of material which is presented to the student is quite large.

⁵ Adult Planbook, 1977-78, p. 13.

In addition to this difficulty there is another. It is the style of writing in the series. In the process of meeting the need for a study which does not demand an extensive educational background and which is free of technical language, the editors of the series seem to have become enamored of sentence-predicate-object sentences, and of periods. An example may suffice:

Lot's herdsmen were quarreling with Abraham's herdsmen. It was a bitter conflict. They forced Lot to ask for separation. With a generous spirit Abraham agreed to the division. He offered Lot his choice of the land. Toward the east stretched the fertile Jordan Valley....⁶

The choice of literary style was certainly deliberate and well-intentioned. It is not by any means all as uniform as this example, but it lacks the variety which makes the reading of large blocks of material interesting. It is to be preferred to the English of scholarly volumes which will, on occasion, fill up a page with clauses and phrases of one sentence until its structure is lost and the meaning buried. It will not maintain the attention of a class at seven o'clock in the morning on a Sunday following a late Saturday. By many it would be considered to be a condescending style and therefore inappropriate for our purposes.

Additionally, the quality of the studies available in the Our Living Bible Series is somewhat uneven. Several of them are outstanding, but the format is limiting to the extreme, and they do not provide tools of analysis for the student. Neither do they demand that the student exert any effort in confronting the text. For these

⁶Thomas F. Chilcote, "Creation and Liberation" (Nashville: Graded Press, 1974), p. 31.

reasons as well, this series was deemed unsuitable for the morning Bible study class.

In this section we took a look at the two adult group studies of the Bible which were available from the publishers of United Methodist curricular resources. Although there are a number of strengths of both of these studies--open-ness to modern scholarship, non-technical language, a multiplicity of aids for teachers, and others--they were found to be lacking in the qualities deemed important by the members of the class for which a curricular resource was sought. The primary dimension lacking was a concern for teaching the students how to do biblical analysis on their own or even a willingness to reveal the process through which one might pass. An alternative was necessary, and the next section of this chapter considers the curriculum of publishers not directly affiliated with any denomination.

C. NON-DENOMINATIONAL CURRICULAR RESOURCES

In this section we will consider a few offerings of several of the publishers of curriculum resources which are not directly related to a particular denomination. Several of them have come to be identified with one or another denomination, but they do not recognize any official ties in the materials which they publish. While we found problems with the studies available from the publishing house of the United Methodist Church, those available from the 'non-denominational' publishers were even less suited to our needs. While these studies were more frequently devotional or pietistic in their outlook, they were less critical, and at times even anti-scholarly in attitude. By far the greatest difficulty with these studies was that the only

consistently-used approach to the interpretation of the text was psychological. In the comments which follow we will see how this approach prevents the possibility of dealing with the first two concerns for curriculum resources; that it be simultaneously scholarly and devotional and also engage students in the hermeneutical task.

1. Psychologistic hermeneutic.

The most serious lapse of these studies is that which we have already identified: for the most part they make exclusive use of a psychological approach to the text. The reader is seldom asked to apply any literary or theological insight. Rather, s/he is invited to 'put yourself in (Daniel's) place,' or asked, 'what would you feel like if you were (Jesus)?' There is, of course, a type of folksy, 'common,' feel to this sort of analysis which would be appropriate were the subject under consideration biography or autobiography. It does not deal with the complexities of the biblical texts.

On occasion this sort of attitude leads to a mis-representation of the actual content of the text, or at best, a complete misunderstanding of the intent of the biblical author. The author of a volume on the Gospel According to Mark for Moody Press suppresses recognition of the text in front of him when it leads to difficulties with his preconception of the text. He was commenting on Mark's Gospel, but he was apparently seeing Matthew's account of the same incident:

As Jesus reminisced with His disciples about the two-and-a-half years of ministering which He had just completed, His one great concern was, "Who do the people say I am?" According to the disciples' answer (8:28), He had failed to get across to the people who he really was. It must have been gratifying to

hear Peter's reply, "Thou art the⁷ Christ" when Jesus directed the question to Peter personally.

In fact there is no indication in Mark's Gospel that Jesus was pleased with the reply. There is no declaration of approval by Jesus of Peter, either here or later. Neither is there any indication by Jesus that Peter's information is divinely revealed. The only words Jesus directs to Peter in this entire pericope are the rebuke, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men."⁸ To claim that Jesus must have been 'gratified' to hear Peter's words is to misrepresent the entire tone of the account.

Recognition of this fact might have led to an understanding of the differences between Mark and Matthew in their understanding of the role of the disciples, and thence to a greater appreciation for the diversity in the early church. Such appreciation can be a reason for thankfulness on the part of the church for the richness of God's grace, such that it speaks to persons in every life situation. Instead, we are offered a pious-sounding reflection on an element of a text which is not present, and students lose the opportunity to struggle through to a deeper, more honest understanding of Mark's Gospel.

This is the crux of the matter: students need to be encouraged to consciously engage in the hermeneutic task on their own. For this they need to be able to develop tools which take the task seriously, and do not simply repeat the impressions of others. A Bible study

⁷ Irving Jensen, Mark (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 62.

⁸ Mark 8.33. See Theodore Weeden, Mark - Traditions in Conflict (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

which does not stir up some original thinking on the part of the participants cannot be said to meet the needs of Christians in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The repetition of the piety of others does not constitute the response of faith, but is rather a form of legalism, a seeking of God's favor for staying in line. A psychological approach to biblical interpretation encourages the student to avoid 'stretching' in understanding or faith.

2. Historical/cultural gap unrecognized.

Another difficulty with the psychological approach to biblical studies is the assumption that a person of the twentieth century upper middle class United States of America can simply, by an exercise of the will, jump into the shoes (rather, sandals) of the gospel characters. There are significant differences of culture as well as technology which radically alter the significance of the text in certain cases. An example may be found in Mark 10.1-12, where Jesus is teaching and is asked a question by the Pharisees 'in order to test him.'⁹ The subject is divorce and the question of the Pharisee is, "Is it lawful?" Jesus deals with their question by having them answer it themselves, and then goes on to deliver what sounds like a very stern demand for the indissolubility of marriage.

This passage is often read in a legalistic fashion, as though Jesus were laying down another law which must be kept. Actually Jesus' answer is a demand for the protection of those who are legally defenseless. A woman had negligible legal and social rights and could

⁹ Mark 10.2.

be sent away by her husband for nearly any reason. Since she could not own property or make contracts, an unmarried woman might find herself in danger of starving unless she became a prostitute.¹⁰ Jesus' teaching must be seen as a midrash on Deuteronomy 23 and 24 before it can be given meaning for today, and it is not possible to simply 'put yourself in their place' in order to understand. This is the second problem with these publishers: their refusal to accept the fruits of historical studies which cast light on a text.

3. Reductionist/Sectarian.

A third troublesome approach in some 'non-denominational' studies is their facility at reduction. The gospel can be reduced to a series of precepts and catchy phrases in this process. Thus, the encounter between Jesus and the man with the Legion¹¹ becomes three categories: Demented, Delivered, Disciple.¹² The lessons then become commentary on the precepts and not on the text. This style of lesson is very reassuring for the beginning student of the Bible, for it assures one that no effort is involved in the study of the Bible. Anyone can be a biblical scholar by simply reading through the biblical narrative and writing the word or phrase that describes the action. Those phrases are given then their dogmatic significance in the commentary and the Bible is once again shown to be supportive of

¹⁰ Edward Hobbs, "Mark and the Old Testament," (Summer course, School of Theology at Claremont, 1976).

¹¹ Mark 5.1-20.

¹² John Blanchard, Read/Mark/Learn (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1966), pp. 18 and 19.

whatever doctrinal viewpoint one wishes to support. This is the practice of interpreting the commentary carried to the extreme and removes the student from the presence of the Word as far as possible.

This practice also points to an interesting irony. Those publishers which consider themselves to be non-denominational (Gospel Light, Victor, etc.) are in some respects more sectarian than the publishers which ally themselves with a particular denomination. This is particularly true in the matter of doctrinal content in relation to a few 'important' doctrines. On matters such as the Virgin Birth, the Imminent Return of Christ and the End of the world, the necessity of dramatic evidence of a Christian's rebirth, and others, these publishers tend to be of one mind. They are clear in their conviction that there is no other legitimate understanding of the Bible's testimony concerning these issues; a position which does not square with the plurality of voices in the Bible itself. It is impossible to be open to the fruits of modern scholarship when it must pass doctrinal tests of admissibility.

4. Ignorant of modern scholarship.

In what has been seen thus far several factors have been identified which might hinder the open-ness of the curricular resources to the insights of modern scholarship. That this is, in fact, the case may be seen in the mindless repetition of church traditions, even when the Bible's own account may suggest alternative understandings. We might note that the only scholarly discipline which seems to be given any weight is word studies. Most of the curricular resources surveyed simply follow the traditional practices of the church in

other areas.

An example may be found in the question of the authorship of the gospels. In several of these studies there is revealed a unanimous opinion that he is John Mark, mentioned in several occasions in the Acts of the Apostles.¹³ There are also references in the letters of Paul and the Pastorals to persons named Mark.¹⁴ This assumption is characteristic of the early church which simply assumed that every instance of a name in the Scriptures referred to the same person. That is most graphically illustrated in the case of Matthew, who, although many evangelical authors would admit wrote later than Mark, is considered to be the same person as the disciple of Jesus called Matthew. In addition, we learn that Matthew also has the name of Levi, although that fact is not to be found in the New Testament, because in Mark's Gospel Jesus called a man named Levi who sat in the tax office. Mark at no time tells us that Levi and Matthew are the same person, and even leaves Levi out of his list of the disciples.¹⁵ When he is called he is described as the son of Alphaeus¹⁶ but the only one in the list of the Twelve who is referred to as the son of Alphaeus is one called James.¹⁷ This is not a very critical issue, but it illustrates the unthinking acceptance of questionable traditions.

¹³ Acts 12.12,15; 15.37,39.

¹⁴ Colossians 4.10; II Timothy 4.11; Philemon 1.24;
I Peter 5.13.

¹⁵ Mark 3.16-19.

¹⁶ Mark 2.14.

¹⁷ Mark 3.18.

5. Reactionary social and political outlook.

In the face of the demand that the curriculum resource be racially and sexually inclusive several of these publications were rigidly unresponsive. Their understanding of the political and social implications of the Bible can only be described as reactionary. In matters of ethics they tend to be individualistic and personalistic to the exclusion of social matters altogether. We have already referred to the individualistic reading of the divorce teachings of Jesus, ignoring the social implications of such teaching in Jesus' day and rendering them mere legalisms. The best example of this style can be found in a whole genre which purports to take biblical teaching and apply it to 'everyday life.' Joyce Landorf's To Lib or Not to Lib¹⁸ is characteristic. It sets a series of modern (and grace-less) stereotypes of those caught in the web of women's liberation (always styled 'Women's Lib' or just 'Lib') and opposes to them God's woman, who is true to God's design, as found in a superficial reading of the apostle Paul. This style recalls the hazards of not recognizing the consequences of the cultural and historical gap between our time and that of the Bible. In this case it leads to an absolutizing of our own cultural mores and values at the expense of open-ness to the Word of the Bible.

In this chapter we saw how the need for an alternative curricular resource emerged. We considered the two major concerns expressed by the members of the adult Bible study class: first, for a

¹⁸ Joyce Landorf, To Lib or Not to Lib (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1972).

study which was both scholarly and devotional, and second, for a study which gave the students tools necessary for their own participation in the analysis and interpretation of the Bible. We also considered the five minor concerns which dealt in a more direct way with the make-up of the class, its strengths and limitations. In the second section of the chapter we analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum resources available from the United Methodist Publishing House and then examined those available from publishers not affiliated with any denomination. Throughout the discussion of the resources already available it was clear that there was a paucity of studies which actually encouraged the development of the skills of biblical interpretation on the part of the students. Other needs expressed by the members of the class were satisfied by one or another of the curricular resources which were available, but no one resource met all the needs expressed, or was even consciously seeking to meet them. This observation served to initiate the creation of a new resource for adult Bible studies which would seek to address these concerns, or at least begin to move in the direction of maintaining the balance called for by them.

Chapter III

THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

In this chapter we will consider the scope of the curricular resource being developed in this project. It will begin with a consideration of the authority of the Bible and of the Gospel of Mark and deal with the issue of Mark's importance for today. It will then move to a consideration of the hermeneutic used in this project, specifically to an understanding of Mark as a theological writer rather than a biographer or historian. This will involve the presentation of three biological concerns evidenced by the author of the Gospel According to Mark. These will be spelled out in some detail and examples from the text of Mark's Gospel which seem to support the readings proposed by this project will be examined. After this we will move to the chapter on the design of the alternative curricular resource and see how the insights of the work on the scope of the curriculum may be utilized.

A. THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

The question arises, why study the Gospel According to Mark? What does the gospel have which the church needs today? In other words, what is the authority of Mark's gospel for us? The question deals not only with Mark's gospel but also with the biblical witness as a whole. If, as we have observed, there is rising interest in the biblical narrative, it is important that we have some ideas about the

significance that the Bible has now as well as exploring the meaning it once had.

1. Dialogue of Faithful Persons

The main value of the New Testament witness for us is in its witness to the faith of the early church. When we read the Bible we are engaging in a dialogue with other faithful persons, separated from us by centuries but engaged in the same task. That task is the understanding of the will of God for our lives. It involves our devotion to his kingdom and our readiness for participation in it. Mark and the other writers of the New Testament, by their recording of the traditions of the church and their own wrestling with the substance of faith encourage us in our quest, and chart for us the parameters of God's definitive self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

2. Provide Avenues of Self-transcendence

By their temporal and geographic proximity to the historical events of Jesus' life they provide us with a dialogue partner of particular importance, and even if they were not so near the events, they would still be important to us by the way in which they provide avenues of transcendence for us. By virtue of the cultural crevasse between us they provide us with a perspective on God's action and his demands which permits us to reach beyond ourselves; to see with new eyes. When we seek to understand the situation and the issues of concern to the gospel-writer we are taking seriously the reality of the Body of Christ; taking seriously the real connectedness of Christian experience and affirming that the same Spirit which moved the author

of Mark's gospel moves us when we read it.

3. Mark's Gospel especially appropriate

Mark's gospel is helpful in this regard because of his particular emphases. Shortly we will see the way in which Mark affirms that Christ is present in the life of his Body, the church. It is this affirmation which is of special importance for the church in the twentieth century. Christians feel the tug of those who would find Christ in every place but the church. In the hyper individualistic culture of the United States, where many are convinced that they can have 'church' best from the comfort of their own living rooms or insulated from other people in their cards on Sunday mornings, the Word comes through Mark's gospel as a renewing and convicting force. It demands that Christians see that they have been joined together in order to be the Body and that it is as his Body that they are called into service. The Gospel According to Mark ends with the promise that Jesus will lead his disciples into Galilee, which is the place of ministry.¹ There is no word of privatistic religion to be found there; only the promise that Christ will be with us wherever we find ourselves in his service.

That in the broadest sense is the scope of the study. We turn now to a more detailed consideration of the intentions of the author of the Gospel According to Mark.

¹See R. H. Lightfoot, Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938).

B. MARK, THE THEOLOGIAN

One of the intentions of this study is to demonstrate that Mark was engaged primarily in writing theology. This does not diminish his ability as either story-teller or historian; rather, it enhances an appreciation of it. This stance permits the students to observe that Mark's 'history-writing' is in the service of his theology, which may permit them to be less concerned with the apparent discrepancies between Mark's narrative and that of the other gospels. It also allows the students to grow in appreciation for Mark's mastery in this genre, the gospel form, seeing that Mark is interested in much more than simply satisfying some type of historical or biographical curiosity about Jesus and his times. This recognition is not easily acquired because the modern preoccupation with the literary forms 'history' and the 'novel' seems to preclude anything which is not easily categorized as either fact or fiction. The gospel form owes much to the type of preaching reported in the Acts of the Apostles or other early Christian literature. It is in the way that the story is told that one makes theological sense of the historical events. We are used to being given the 'moral' of the story at the end, even when the significance of the story is bound up in the telling of it.

C. THREE THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS OF MARK'S GOSPEL

In what follows we will consider the theological concerns of Mark which permeate his gospel and consider a few examples of each. Mark has three major concerns in his exposition of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Each of them is developed throughout the gospel and is

used as an organizing motif for the study developed for the men's Bible study group. The three concerns of Mark considered here are to demonstrate that 1. God had all along intended that the message of his favor be extended to the gentiles; 2. Jesus is himself God present with us and the focus of all the promises to Israel as well as God's decisive saving event; and 3. Jesus is effective in the present life of his Body, the church.

One may observe that several items cannot be found among this list. The most notable absence is any word that Mark wishes to give a connected account of the life of Jesus, or that he is concerned with a portrait of Jesus and those who knew him. Neither can one find in this list the idea that Mark wants to tell his readers what Jesus taught (in any detail). Although these are elements which some persons have found in Mark's gospel, they do not appear to be concerns of the author. The author of the Gospel According to Mark is concerned primarily with theology; specifically with what later theologians would call Christology and soteriology. We can see this from the structure of Mark's account and by the forms which he used, some of which we will consider here. It may help to think of Mark's gospel as a Christian midrash on the Old Testament, if that puts it into an understandable context.

1. Gentiles included in Plan of Salvation

The first concern of Mark's which we have identified is the demonstration that the gentiles are now and have been from the beginning a part of God's plan of salvation. There are two dimensions to this concern. The first is Mark's conviction that the Israelites were supposed to know all along that they were to lead the gentiles to

faith in the Lord. The gospel writer supports this idea in the incident of the cleansing of the temple among other places.²

a. Old Testament demonstrates God's intent. Jesus comes into the city after cursing the fig tree which bore no fruit and disrupts--through aggressive action--the functioning of the temple. He specifically stops that which is necessary for the temple to continue functioning as a place of worship, the availability of pigeons and acceptable currency for the sacrifices. Those who bought and sold were driven out, as were those who changed money so that sacrificial offerings could be bought. Those who sold pigeons (the sacrificial offering) were also driven out of the temple.³ Although this has frequently been read as a condemnation of those who 'commercialize God's house,' it was no such thing. Rather, the temple money-changers and pigeon-sellers provided a service necessary for the maintenance of worship in the cosmopolitan Jerusalem where faithful Jews from all parts of the Roman Empire could be expected to come to offer their worship in the temple. Jesus shut down the operation of the temple for the day. The prohibition against carrying anything from the temple would effectively prevent anyone from bringing anything else to sacrifice or to offer at the temple.

The reason for this event becomes clear when we read the saying attributed to Jesus in Mark 11.17: "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you

²Mark 11.14-19.

³Mark 11.16.

have made it a den of robbers." It is evident that the critical words are not, as is sometimes supposed, 'a house of prayer,' for the temple was clearly that, and it is stretching things a bit to imagine that Jesus was upset about the quality of temple prayers. Instead the operational words are 'for all the nations.'⁴ The word translated 'nations' (*ethnesin*) is used in two senses throughout the New Testament. In the first case it simply refers to the peoples of the world and may be considered to include Israel. In the other case it translates *goyim*, and refers exclusively to the nations other than Israel, the gentiles.⁵

Jesus charges the priests and scribes with turning the temple from the purpose of God to a place where they retreat with the 'goods:' a "robber's den." It is not a place of robbery,⁶ but a place where those who should have been offering the knowledge and worship of God to the gentiles have retreated, with that knowledge and worship kept for themselves; in effect, robbery.

When this is seen in connection with the condemnation of the barren fig tree the point is complete. The fig tree, in this reading a symbol for Israel, is cursed because it has borne no fruit. Paradoxically Mark explicitly states that it is not the season for figs and yet Jesus still demands of it fruit. A psychological interpreter

⁴Isaiah 56.7.

⁵Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "ethnos" in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 364.

⁶Which would support the interpretation that Jesus is condemning buying and selling as such in the temple.

is left with an image of Jesus as a petty, irrational (or at least ignorant) tyrant, who expects somehow that the fig tree will be holding on to some fruit all year long in case the Son of God should come by.⁷

An understanding of Mark's theological interest helps make the incident more intelligible to the modern reader. Mark makes a 'sandwich' of the two stories (cursing of the fig tree and cleansing of the temple) because he intends that one interpret the other. The incident of the cursing of the fig tree begins with 11.13, halts at verse 14 for the temple scene, and does not pick up again until 11.20. If the fig tree points to Israel, we can see that the fruit for which Jesus is looking is the message of salvation extended to all peoples.⁸ Jesus' shutting-down of the temple sacrifices is a foreshadowing of the destruction of the temple (in 70 AD) which Mark indicates was precipitated by the failure of the priests and scribes to fulfill God's purpose for it.⁹

b. Jesus demonstrates God's intent. For Mark, Jesus is not simply the one who announced what God has all along intended, but he is also the one who brings the events to a new place. Jesus fills-full the intentions of God announced in the prophetic writings, and in his person decisively opens the door for the gentiles to participation in the salvation of God's people. The temple cleansing is surely an

⁷ It sounds much like the Jesus of the infancy narratives of Thomas, who zaps a playmate because he happens to brush against Jesus.

⁸ A 'light to the nations.'

⁹ This idea from Edward Hobbs, "Mark and the Old Testament."

instance of this notion; it is not the first indication. The mystifying exchange between Jesus and the disciples in the boat after the second of the feedings in the wilderness provides an example of the new thing that Jesus has accomplished.¹⁰

As soon as Jesus and the disciples finish feeding the four thousand, they send them away and get in a boat to go to the district of Dalamnutha.¹¹ There he has a short exchange with the Pharisees who seek a sign from heaven, Jesus declares that "this generation will receive no sign," they get into the boat again, and head out into the water.¹²

It is at this point (verse 14) that the peculiarities begin. First, we learn that although they brought a loaf of bread, they had forgotten to bring the bread. It is a loaf but 'it does not count.' This is, of course, similar to the situation respecting the number of disciples. There are thirteen disciples named, but only twelve counted.¹³ It corresponds to Mark's reading of the Old Testament listing of the tribes of Israel, where twelve tribes are given a census and Levi, the thirteenth tribe, is specifically not numbered.¹⁴ In the two feedings Jesus has used five loaves and seven loaves

¹⁰Mark 8.13.21.

¹¹Mark 8.9-10.

¹²Mark 8.11-13.

¹³Levi is not numbered among the disciples when they are listed in Mark 3.16-19, although he is recorded as having been called by Jesus in chapter 1, verses 13 and 14.

¹⁴Numbers 1.49, "Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number."

respectively; a total of twelve loaves. Now we find again that there is a thirteenth loaf which is not counted. Even if it were a very small loaf it should still, one would think, be considered bread. Yet the disciples are adamant: "we have no bread."¹⁵

What then is the significance of the thirteenth loaf? The disciples do not recognize that they have a loaf in the boat with them because it is Jesus himself and it reappears at the Last Supper. There Jesus interprets for them the significance of the loaf: it is his body which is broken on their behalf.¹⁶

Beginning with verse 17 of chapter 8, Jesus seeks to lead the disciples to an understanding of the significance of the two feedings and the amounts of food that are taken up. When the disciples misunderstand the saying of Jesus to beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod, he questions them about the feedings. Of course, Mark is not as interested in the disciples understanding of the incidents as he is with ours. The disciples play the part straight, and never seem to get what Mark hopes that we are perceptive enough to notice. If we were tempted to rush through this exchange without careful reading, Mark has placed a stop before us with the question of Jesus, "Do you not yet understand?"

In the exchange between Jesus and the disciples we discover that Jesus broke five loaves and fed five thousand with them, leaving (as the disciples observe) twelve baskets left over. In the second

¹⁵ Mark 8.16.

¹⁶ Mark 14.22. This interpretation also from Hobbs.

feeding Jesus fed four thousand with seven loaves. In that case the disciples observed that there were seven baskets full of pieces left over.

The two feedings have a double function. In the first case they point us back to the Old Testament. Why two feedings? There are two wilderness feedings by YHWH of the Hebrews.¹⁷ The use of two feedings provides Mark with a Moses typology which is important to him in his christology. We even have echoes of Moses' questioning of God, "The people among whom I am number six hundred thousand on foot; and thou hast said, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat a whole month!' Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to suffice them? Or shall the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?"¹⁸

The disciples demand of Jesus (forgetting the first feeding of the bigger crowd), "How can one feed these with bread here in the desert?" In this case Mark demonstrates that Jesus exceeds the great personages of the Old Testament. He is not simply another great figure 'like Moses.' He plays the part of YHWH in a commentary on Exodus and Numbers.

The second function of the feedings points ahead to the messianic feast, and deals most specifically with the amount of bread which is taken up. That which is left over is for those who could not make it to the feast. It is taken up so that those who were not

¹⁷ Exodus 16 and Numbers 11.

¹⁸ Numbers 11.21-22; It is a good question. God's answer is even better, "Is the Lord's hand shortened?"

present could still have a part in the banquet of manna from heaven. Mark suggests that the bread which Jesus gives is intended for two groups. The first is a group characterized by the number twelve. That is, Israel. The second is a group characterized by the number seven, which is the gentiles. The gentiles come later to the banquet than the Jews, but they come nevertheless.¹⁹

c. Jesus' death decisive for Gentiles. Another instance of Mark's insistence that Jesus has opened the door wide for the gentiles is to be found at the crucifixion, where it is recorded that the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom, as soon as he breathed his last.²⁰ This may be understood as the end of the division between that which is reserved exclusively for the high priests and that which belongs to all the people. It is significant that immediately following the tearing of the curtain in the temple it is a gentile, the centurion who was standing in front of him, who is cited as saying, "truly, this man was God's son."²¹ Mark, by this incident, indicates that the Shekinah has left the temple to dwell in the world, an event of special importance to the gentiles.

¹⁹For support of the number 7 as a symbol for the gentiles we may consider Genesis 10, where the table of the nations (*goyim*) has seventy nations, to Acts 13.19, where it is stated that there were seven nations in the land, and Acts 6.3, where we learn that the (Hebrew) disciples instruct the company to select seven (Greek-speaking) deacons. None of them has a 'Jewish' name. None of these instances is conclusive, but they point to a meaning which was evidently current and because of their consistency with Mark's purposes give meaning to the incident described here.

²⁰Mark 15.36-37.

²¹Mark 15.39.

These three points make up the first concern of Mark; to demonstrate that God has included the gentiles in his plan of salvation. Although the second point, that Jesus demonstrated in his actions God's intention, is more obscure and demands more connections for its meaning to emerge, all three are supportive of the same concept. Each of them is important in Mark's exposition of his story of the Good News of Jesus the Christ. In these examples we have also seen two of the ways that Mark makes use of his Bible. In the first incident we heard Jesus quote Isaiah 56.7. Direct quotation is one of Mark's uses of the Old Testament. Another is allusion. In the feedings Jesus' actions allude by re-enactment to the feedings of the Hebrew people in the Exodus traditions. In the next section, on who Jesus is, we will see another use of the Old Testament by Mark. Mark marshals each of these elements of his narrative to demonstrate his theological concerns.

2. Who Jesus Is

Mark's second major concern is the correct understanding of who Jesus is. This takes two forms in this gospel. Firstly, Jesus is the new Israel. Secondly, he is God present with us. These expressions of who Jesus is are presented almost in opposition to other potential views of Jesus. We already observed with another issue how Mark does not place as much significance on such titles as 'Christ' for Jesus. It is not that he would deny them, but it seems that for Mark these have depreciated in importance, and so he turns to 'new' expressions such as 'Son of Man.'

a. Jesus the New Israel. In our demonstration that Jesus is the new Israel, we will lift three incidents in Mark's Gospel into consideration. Each of them points to a dimension of the Exodus event, either by parallel structure or by allusion to elements of the Old Testament account. In this way we shall see how Mark indicates that Jesus is the telos of the New Testament promises. Mark presents his claim that Jesus is the new Israel mostly through the structure of his account. Both Matthew and Luke seem to have been aware of this for they make use of similar patterns in their own writing. In Matthew it is particularly easy to see how Jesus duplicates the Old Testament pattern associated with Israel, especially in the infancy narratives, including the death of the first-born instituted by the tyrant, the flight into Egypt, the return through the desert, and the entrance into Palestine in the northern region rather than by the southern, more direct route. In the Gospel According to Mark the pattern is not as distinct, and occurs in a more fragmented, less systematic form.

1). Jesus and the rout of Pharaoh. The encounter between Jesus and the man possessed by Legion is an instance.²² It recalls the Song of Moses, which celebrates the deliverance of Israel from Pharaoh and his chârîots.²³ As the incident opens Jesus is emerging from the sea, over which he has just demonstrated his power.²⁴ Coming

²²Mark 5.10-20.

²³Exodus 15.

²⁴Mark 4.35-41.

out of the water he is met by a man with an unclean spirit. The word translated met has the sense of meeting in battle (*hupantaō*).²⁵ It is the only instance in Mark's gospel where we learn the name of the unclean spirit, and here the name is that of a Roman military unit, the legion. Jesus proceeds to cast the spirits into a great herd of pigs feeding nearby. The pigs rush into the sea and are drowned. The inhabitants of the region implore Jesus to leave the area because they are afraid.

The Song of Moses is a victory psalm which celebrates the power of the Lord over the sea and his destruction of the chariots of Pharaoh and his army, "they sank into the depths like a stone."²⁶ The enemy had attacked (15.9) but the Lord triumphed and "the sea covered them." The consequence of this is also celebrated: "the nations (gentiles) heard and trembled....terror and dread fell upon them."²⁷

In the chart below we have set out the parallels:

<u>Exodus 14 and 15</u>	<u>Mark 4 and 5</u>
Israel passes through the sea	Jesus and the disciples go through the sea
Israel passes safely because of God's intercession and demonstration of power over the sea and wind	The disciples pass through safely because Jesus tells the sea and wind to be quiet
Israel is attacked by Pharaoh and his army	Jesus is met (attacked) by one who is really a legion

²⁵ Walter Bauer, A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other Christian literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 845.

²⁶ Exodus 15.5 (NEB).

²⁷ Exodus 15.14,16.

Pharaoah and his chariots are drowned in the sea which the Israelites have just passed through

Legion is drowned (after entering the swine) in the sea which Jesus and the disciples have just passed through

the nations (*goyim*) are afraid as a result of this event and permit the Israelites to pass undisturbed

the inhabitants of the area (we must presume they are gentiles because they have herds of swine) are afraid (5.15) and implore Jesus to leave the area

This idea that Jesus is the new Israel is to an extent merely a reflection on the interest Mark has in showing us that Jesus' life and actions echo the saving actions of God enunciated in his Bible, our Old Testament. John Reumann has observed in this connection that Mark is not interested in demonstrating that Jesus 'fulfills the scripture,' but rather that Jesus' actions 'conform with scripture.'²⁸

2). Jesus and the Exodus Pattern. Jesus repeats the Exodus pattern also in the baptism of John. This can be seen most easily by reference to the chart below. This repetition of the Exodus pattern emphasizing different elements from that of the 5th chapter is indicative of Mark's disregard for a simple, linear progression. Both Matthew and Luke have a more systematic approach to the use of the Old Testament patterns (both of them painting parallels to the movement through the pentateuch in broad strokes). Mark is content, evidently, to make use of this pattern in a variety of ways depending upon his emphasis at a given moment. Here is the first instance of his use of the Exodus motifs:

²⁸ John Reumann, "Psalm 22 at the Cross," Interpretation, XXVIII, (1974), pp. 42-43.

Exodus motifsMark 1.9-13Israel out of Egypt

Out of Nazareth by Galilee

passes through the waters
(constitutive event for
Israel, becomes God's people)baptized in Jordan (You were my
Son, the Beloved; my favor rests
on you)

sojourn in the wilderness

Jesus into wilderness

40 years

40 days

Israel tested
in LXX, *peirazo*=tested or temptedJesus tempted (also *peirazo*)

Israel fed by God in wilderness

Jesus ministered to by angels

3). Jesus and the Covenant. The second most important event in the salvation history of Israel, after the passing through the waters, was the covenant at Sinai. We can see that Mark wishes to demonstrate that Jesus' actions in some way correspond to the most important of elements of the salvation history of Israel itself. In the transfiguration Mark presents Jesus as a Moses figure, but with an important difference. We shall make use of a chart again to illustrate the parallels:

Moses and SinaiJesus' TransfigurationMoses on mountain 6 days before
the Lord speaks Ex. 24.16account begins "after six days"
9.2

Moses on Mt. Sinai Ex. 24.16

Jesus on un-named 'great, high
mountain' 9.2 (one would be
hard-pressed to find a mountain
matching that description in
Galilee)Moses takes three persons with
him 24.9Jesus takes 3 persons with him
9.2two are brothers (Nadab and
Abihu) 24.9two are brothers (James and John)
9.2The Lord speaks to Moses out of
a cloud 24.16The Lord speaks out of a cloud
9.7

the subject of discussion
between Moses and YHWH is the
tent of meetings Ex. 25

Peter offers to build tents 9.5

When Moses comes down his face
shines 34.29

Jesus is transfigured, clothes
become dazzlingly white

When Moses comes off the
mountain with the tablets he
finds the people have forsaken
the worship of YHWH and turned
to idols Ex. 32

When Jesus comes off the mountain
he finds the disciples unable to
cure a demoniac and he says they
are 'a faithless generation'
9.18-19

(in Num. 14.11 the Lord says:
How long will this people
despise me? How long will they
not believe in me?)

(Jesus: How long am I to be with
you? How long am I to bear with
you?)

The most significant aspect of this comparison is that just when we might expect to hear some affirmation of the equivalence of Jesus and Moses after Peter offers to build tents for them, we hear instead what could be understood as a rebuke of Peter. The voice from the cloud does not affirm the similarity between the two but rather declares that Jesus is the "Son, the Beloved," and demands that they "Listen to him."²⁹ In any case Peter is not taken up on his offer, and we understand that Jesus stands in the line of salvation represented by Moses, but that he is more, He is God's Son.

b. God Present with Us. There is a second element of Jesus' identity which is important to Mark. It is never stated explicitly, but is broadly suggested in several instances. It is the concept that Jesus is in fact the Presence of God; God is incarnate in him. Let us suggest how Mark may be understood to pursue this idea.

²⁹ Mark 9.7.

1). Stilling of the storm. One indication of this idea that God is in some way God, is to be found in the stilling of the storm,³⁰ an incident to which we have already referred and to which we return later. It is not absolutely clear in this story that Jesus' role is more than that of a Moses figure, but there are several indications that it is. In the first place there is no mention of divine intervention as there was in the Moses story. The disciples are afraid and they wake Jesus, crying to him, "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?"³¹ It is Jesus who speaks to the wind and the waves, with no word of his prayer or other appeal to 'outside sources.'³² Also, the manner in which Mark uses his accounts of the actions of Jesus as a commentary on the Old Testament suggests that the parallels with several psalms are instructive. Psalm 44.23-25 offers an example:

Bestir thyself, Lord; why dost thou sleep?
 Awake, do not reject us for ever.
 Why dost thou hide thy face,
 heedless of our misery and our sufferings?
 For we sink down to the dust....

Psalm 107.23-29 adds to this:

Others there are who go to sea in ship
 and make their living on the wide waters.
 These men have seen the acts of the Lord
 and his marvellous doings in the deep.
 At his command the storm-wind rose
 and lifted the waves high.
 Carried up to heaven, plunged down to the depths,
 tossed to and fro in peril,
 they reeled and staggered like drunken men,
 and their seamanship was all in vain.

³⁰ Mark 4.36-41.

³¹ Mark 4.38.

³² Mark 4.39.

So they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
 and he brought them out of their distress.
 The storm sank to a murmur and the waves
 of the sea were stilled.

These certainly suggested (if they are behind Mark's account) that Mark means for us to know that Jesus is far more than any miracle-worker. He presents Jesus in a situation which parallels an Old Testament event and uses language which suggests certain psalms in order to draw out the difference between Jesus and Moses, rather than the similarities. This is conditioned strongly by the appeal to the psalm materials where the actor is not the Lord's agent, but the Lord himself. It is also true of the Moses typology because Jesus plays all the parts in Mark's telling. He is the one who acts and in whom the power to act in this way resides. In this way we can see that Jesus is not simply a miracle worker who has power over the natural elements, but he is the one who bears the authority of God.

2). I am. There are other instances in Mark's gospel where Mark suggests that Jesus is, in fact, God. The most outstanding is the trial sequence of chapter 14. Here Jesus is asked by the high priest, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"³³ Jesus does not say, "yes" or even refuse to answer. Instead he answers more than is asked: "I am; and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."³⁴ Dr. Edward Hobbs is convinced that what Jesus replies would not constitute blasphemy were it only a claim to messiahship. It is known that a number

³³Verse 61.

³⁴Verse 62.

of 'messiahs' arrived during the period preceding Jesus' advent. What is blasphemy is the manner in which Jesus responds, which sounds suspiciously like Exodus 3.14, where God tells Moses that his name is "I am." "Tell them I AM has sent you." Dr. Hobbs bases this contention on the fact that *ego eimi* (I am) would not be the usual way of responding to such a question, and upon Mark's previous use of the Old Testament in similar fashion.

This concludes the second theological concern of Mark's Gospel.

Here we have observed that Mark wishes to suggest, at least, that Jesus' role is not to be confused with either that of a miracle worker, or even with that of a Moses figure. Jesus is something altogether new in human experience, the presence of God dwelling among human beings. The disciples come in for such strong criticism in Mark's account of Jesus because they are either unable or unwilling to see beyond their expectations. This is the second theological concern of Mark, to demonstrate who Jesus was and why no one understood at the time.

3. Jesus Is Effective in His Church

The third major concern of Mark is the one which is also of greatest interest to a class studying Mark today. It is his conviction that Jesus is effective in the ongoing life of his Body, the church. We shall look to two occasions where it seems clear that Mark intends this understanding of Jesus. The first is one we have considered in regard to other points already: the stilling of the storm. The second is the healing miracle found in the second chapter of Mark.

a. Jesus is alive in the church. The stilling of the storm (Mark 4.36-41) shows the results of a process of telling and retelling, so that in its present form it has several layers of meaning. We shall look at it as though it were a sermon preached early in the life of the church, at a point when anxiety about the delay of the Lord's return was growing, as was some form of persecution or harassment of the Christians. Jesus and the disciples (the entire church at that point, we may observe) got into a boat in order to cross to the other side, where the Gerasene demoniac awaited them. In verse 37 a great storm arose and the boat began to take in water. In the midst of this terrifying situation, Jesus slept soundly, so soundly that finally the disciples had to awake him, berating him for his unconcern. This would be intelligible to one hearing this in the context we have suggested. The church itself, often depicted as a boat, is under pressure; it even seems to be sinking. The Lord is nowhere to be seen. He must be asleep somewhere. Does he not care about the situation of his church?

The sermon continues. Jesus awakes and demonstrates that he is still very much concerned with the situation of the disciples. The problem is not that he sleeps, but with their lack of faith. "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"³⁵ In its present form this story is a sermonic call to faith in the presence of the Lord Jesus with his Body, the church; and an affirmation that whatever storm is imperilling the church will not swamp it.

³⁵Verse 40.

b. Jesus is alive after death. Another example of Mark's faith in the availability of the Lord may be found in the healing miracle reported in the second chapter. In this case he affirms the fact that even death cannot separate one from Jesus. This story is also an excellent example of the process through which an incident would pass as it was retold, and is consistent with other types of Jewish midrashim.

Here we find again the peculiar descriptions which point us to an understanding which would not be obvious otherwise. In this pericope Jesus is "at home,"³⁶ and a crowd gathers which is so dense that there is not even room at the door for one to hear. Jesus is preaching the word, and four men come, carrying a paralytic on a *krabaton*, which is the word for a Roman soldier's bedroll. Although it is not unusual that this man was carried by four friends, we might observe that the scene resembles a funeral, with four pall bearers. A *krabaton* was also the thing in which a soldier would be buried. Since the men could not get near Jesus through the door they unroof the roof and when they had dug it out well enough, they let down their friend through it. The language demands that we picture the four digging a hole which, when completed, receives the mat with the paralytic laid on it. Jesus is waiting below and when he sees the faith of the four, he says to the paralytic, "My child, your sins are forgiven."³⁷

Then Mark shifts quickly to a dialogue with the scribes sitting there. In short order, he uses the word "rise" three times and

³⁶Mark 2.1.

³⁷Verse 5.

connects it with the forgiveness of sins. Were this story told in any other than a Christian context it would be possible to claim that it does not refer to the resurrection, but in the Gospel According to Mark that seems unlikely. This is especially true given the concern which we know existed among Christians whose parents or friends had already died without seeing the return of Christ. Paul speaks to this concern in 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18, and there assures his readers that the dead in Christ will not be left behind, but will precede those who still live at the Parousia. In 1 Corinthians he also adds another dimension to this concern when he refers to persons being baptized for the dead.³⁸ This may help to make sense of the phrase in our story which indicates that Jesus forgives the sin of the paralytic because he sees the faith of the four who brought him. So the story does at least two things. It assures the believer that Jesus will be with him/her after death, and it assures the believers that their prayers on behalf of those who have died are also efficacious. It does these things through the agency of a story about the healing of a paralytic, which reads remarkably like an allegory about death and resurrection.

Thus we have seen in this survey of three major concerns of Mark that he is first-of-all writing theology, and using the agency of the gospel story to do it. Mark is interested in the story of Jesus' life only to the extent that it illuminates the meaning of Jesus himself and the way he offers of salvation. It is not less 'true' because it does not limit itself to 'just the facts,' rather it is more 'true' in the sense that it leads us to an understanding of the elemental

³⁸1 Corinthians 15.29.

Truth of Jesus, something which lies beyond the mere facts of his life among us.

D. CONCLUSION

This understanding has been suggested to us by the manner in which Mark tells his stories about incidents in the life of Jesus. In each of them there are elements which suggest that the author is interested in something besides the superficial meaning. Through this approach we have been able to see that Mark has at least three major theological concerns, which are, as we have stated previously, the demonstration that God has intended the Gentiles to have a part in the salvation promised to Israel, that Jesus embodies those promises and is God present with us, and that Jesus is effective in the life of his Body, the church.

Chapter IV

A DESIGN OF THE CURRICULAR MODEL

In this chapter the design--which developed from a consideration of the needs of the members of the class and the scope of the curriculum to be included--will be spelled out. Enough has been stated about the process through which the curricular resource developed that we shall be concerned only with the direct influences on the final shape of the resource and the design of the resource itself. In this chapter we will begin with consideration of the characteristics of adult learners described by Malcolm Knowles. This will help to round out the specific concerns which were raised by the members of the class and listed in the chapter on Standards (chapter II). This information will provide connective links between the minimum expectations of curriculum which is designed for adults and the special needs of the class for whom this resource was designed.

From the characteristics of adult learners and the concerns raised by the members of the class may be derived some guidelines for the actual practice of curriculum development. Those suggested by the specific circumstances of this class will then be proposed, followed by a short discussion on the process of the curricular resource. This will take the form of an examination of the two directions involved in the design of this resource.

After that we will consider the specifics of this design, including questions of the environment suggested for the use of the

curricular resource, elements of each class session, and the structure of the course. Involved in the discussion of the course structure will be a description of the length of the course, the characteristics of each part, and the materials for home study. In the concluding chapter we will consider the entire project and answer some questions raised by it, and some of the course materials may be found in the appendix.

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS

In addition to the concerns of which the members of the class were conscious, there are characteristics of adult learners in general which must be taken into consideration in the design of a curricular resource. Malcolm Knowles has listed four:

1. Adults enter into learning situations with other than learners' roles. He suggests some examples: producer, doer, parent, worker, citizen, etc.
2. Adults have more experience to which to relate their learnings than do youth studying the same material.
3. Adults have a different quality of experience than do youth; they have been cast in roles such as breadwinner, parent, or employer which shape their approach to experience.
4. Adults have the intention of more immediate applications of learnings. They are problem-oriented and are looking for solutions.¹

It may be seen that these characteristics help to place in perspective some of the concerns raised by the class. In particular the major concern of the class that whatever curricular resource might

¹Malcolm Knowles, "A Theory of Adult Educational Methodology," in Lawrence C. Littel (ed.) Wider Horizons in Christian Adult Education (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962).

be used in the class should provide tools for engaging in the hermeneutical task reflects the fact that adults are not only learners in the learning situation. They come as persons who are also doers and producers and they demand a larger share of the educational enterprise than youth may. To an extent the fact that adults are concerned about the application of learnings may be reflected in the other major concern of the class; that they be not only stimulated intellectually by the study, but also find a resource for their spiritual growth. The devotional dimension of the resource is that element which is directly and immediately applicable to one's own life.

The second and third characteristics described by Knowles suggest that the manner in which the resource is used is of great importance. The supporting environment and the style of presentation of the class should make a significant difference in the reception of the study. Adult students should be given opportunities to share their experiences and the influence that they have on the learnings produced by the study. The experiences of the adult students should be utilized as an element of the course design. In this way the course design might take advantage of the large amount and diversity of the experience of adult learners.

B. GUIDELINES FOR THE DESIGN

When we combine the characteristics specified by Malcolm Knowles with the concerns raised by the members of the class (enumerated in the chapter on standards), we find that certain guidelines for the development of the new curriculum resource are suggested. Four shall be expressed here which served as the determining elements for

the shape of the curricular resource. Other responses to the various concerns of the class members and the characteristics of adult learners will be evident in the description of the design itself.

1. Text: the Bible.

The first guideline for the design of the curricular resource is that the Bible itself should be the primary text. Students should be encouraged to discover for themselves the structural elements of the gospel without recourse to lengthy commentary on the text by experts. This will deal with the problem of various degrees of facility and interest in reading. The study guides for the course will make use of a question and answer format which will lead the students through the process involved, without doing it for them. They shall by this means be directed in their attention to the text itself.

2. Non-technical language.

The second guideline is that the resource should avoid ecclesiastical language (churchly jargon) and technical terminology which is not carefully explained. It is possible to present the ideas for which the church has developed its own shorthand manner of speaking without using that language. When it seems necessary or useful to use technical language it may be explained at that point.

3. Scholarly and devotional.

Thirdly, the curricular resource should make available both information which is based on the best information of scholars, and material which draws out the devotional aspects of the texts. Insofar

as possible these interests should be combined so that it can be seen that they are two dimensions of the text, rather than two systems of interpretation which are at war with each other. Where the applications to the faithful response of the students is not evident in the course of the examination of a text, it might be exposed by periodic pauses in the forward movement of the study for serious reflection.

4. Focus on discovery.

The fourth guideline provides that the study will be most helpful when it focuses on what the students can discover rather than on filling them with information which seems important to the instructor. This suggests that the curriculum should take seriously the contribution of the students, and their willingness to learn, when they are given guidance in the selection and use of tools for study. Class discussion, for example, could be an important part of the process once the students know what elements to look for in the scriptural text. The main function of the curricular resource is to provide guidance in the approach to a text and in the steps which are necessary for proper analysis and interpretation.

These four guidelines do not constitute a curriculum. They do provide an attitude with which the development of the curricular resource can be measured. They also provide criteria which are subject to evaluation, although direct measurement is not possible because of the lack of quantifiable elements. It should be noted that these criteria depend upon common understandings of terms such as 'devotional' and 'scholarly,' which may not actually be present. In the context of the local church it was believed that there still exists some

unanimity about the meaning of these terms, even though such unanimity does not currently present itself in the academic community.

In the process of designing the curriculum which is the subject of the project these guidelines exercised the greatest influence. It was also thought important to seek to respond to those concerns which did not play a large part in the guidelines as they were finally stated, and to retain the particular virtues which the other curricular resources displayed. That description also reflects the priority given to the various influences mentioned, especially in those places where various of the concerns conflicted.

C. TWO DIRECTIONS WITHIN THE CURRICULAR DESIGN

It was thought that the design of the curriculum should be simple enough in its form that the students could have a sense of participation in its development. If they could observe the process involved and have a measure of trust in it, then they might be able to play a bigger part in its execution and evaluation. This led to the attempt to express the dimensions of the learning process in terms of two directions: 'step-by-step' and 'superficial-to-reflective.' These two directions refer to the presentation of the content of the curriculum, both the amount and the depth.

1. 'Step-by-step.'

In the first direction, the curricular resource does not seek to cover vast amounts of the biblical material at any one time. It takes individual sections and pericopes and deals with them in isolation before seeking to deal with them in terms of the larger work.

This is true even of the four introductory sessions in which unifying themes are sought throughout Mark's Gospel. Even here there are only a few sections considered in detail before general principles which tie them together are derived. Throughout the following sessions students are asked to deal with the particular text before them before proceeding to summaries or connections. In this way the student has an opportunity to examine the various elements of the text before being asked to sort out which are the most important.

In this regard it may be observed that each element of the home study guides relates to the previous and following elements. In this way the work the student does at home is to a large extent self-correcting. Early in the study many of the questions even supply the most likely answer to the previous question. Later in the study they are inclined to be based on the answers to previous questions.

2. 'Superficial-to-reflective.'

The second direction is 'superficial-to-reflective.' The first lessons ask simple questions which expect the student simply to read what is on the surface of the text and repeat it. They do not demand much in the way of interpretation, but do require a little inductive reasoning. In this way the student is encouraged to pay attention to what is actually in the text and useful for interpretation, before bringing to the task all that s/he had received from other sources than the text itself.

The student is asked to observe certain things about the text, locating certain words for example, and to write them on the study sheet. After a process of examination, the student is requested to

draw whatever conclusions to which the various elements point. This is not the same as simply asking a student to read the story and tell what it means; a process which tends to produce the student's opinion about her or his impressions of the text. This process demands the student deal seriously with the text, even those elements which may not be consonant with the opinions the student brings to the enterprise.

This process, in which the student is always asked to identify the superficial sense of the text before proceeding to a search for the deeper meanings, is continued throughout the study. In this manner, it is hoped that the learners may be able to move beyond the 'Sunday school hermeneutic' and the deeply ingrained tendency to catalogue texts with which we are familiar without seriously confronting the biblical Word.

As the students progress through the curricular resource they are asked to do much more interpretation and digestion of larger sections of text. Because of the conviction that one of the reasons that students engage in group study is the need for guidance, the lessons never completely relinquish the viewpoint which they bring. The curriculum is not designed to be a completely open-ended experience. It has certain points to make and a claim to place upon the participants. The student is challenged by this process to either accept or reject its claim, but in any case to deal with the viewpoint expressed in the study.

D. THE SPECIFICS OF THE DESIGN

Included in our consideration of the parts of the curriculum

design will be the materials used for home study and how they are used in the class situation; the division of the study into two major parts; and the outline used in each session. The form which is presented here represents the design which resulted from a process of testing over the period of several months that the curricular resource was tried out. Although it represents the final results there were no major changes from the original design, and so it has not been considered necessary to present both the original proposals and the form which resulted.

1. Home study guides.

The major element of the curricular resource is the weekly guide for home study. Each study guide has four parts. The first is a paragraph of introduction to the lesson for the week. This took the form of either an introduction to the history of an idea, a summary of several approaches to the text for the week taken from different schools of thought, or identification of connections which might be sought in approaching the text. An example of a summary of the history of an idea may be found in the guide to Session IV which deals with Mark 7.1-37. The introductory paragraph makes some suggestions about the idea of the Law and what it meant in the Bible, and encourages the students to go beyond the accepted stereotypes about the Old Testament conception of Law. An example of the second kind of introductory paragraph may be found in Session VI where the various ways in which the Transfiguration have been understood are presented. Session VII provides an example of the introductory paragraph which draws the connections between the text of Mark and the Old Testament, in this case the

book of Deuteronomy. There are minor variations of these types, but they all serve the purpose of directing the attention of the learner to the subject at hand. They are the first step in the process of focusing the concentration of the student.

The second part of each guide is a small rectangle set off by asterisks in which several learnings which are intended for that session may be found. There are generally three of them and they are both specific to the lesson involved and also general lessons toward which the lesson points. They are presented as a measure of the scope of the lesson, and in order that the learners may sense the continuity of themes throughout the Gospel. Generally the first of the learnings indicated will specify a theme or element of the text for the session. It is couched in the language of the text itself or in paraphrase. The second learning specifies what the session will yield in terms of information about the characters of the Gospel or of the New Testament era. It frequently takes the form of a statement about who Jesus is or about what the lesson tells us about the church at the time of Mark's writing. The third learning is most often a statement about the meaning of the text for us and for the situation of the church in our time.

The third part of each take-home guide is a call to prayer or a prayerful attitude toward the task of biblical studies. It always begins with the declarative, "First, stop.", and is then followed by a suggestion for prayer. This is sometimes a sample prayer which the learner may repeat and sometimes an injunction to a certain attitude. It is designed to disrupt the casual manner in which the scripture is occasionally read.

The final part of each study guide is the question and answer

movement through the text. After each question there is a place for the answer which the learner finds. This is either a line for short answers or a space in which the learner can work out a response. There are a variety of types of questions used throughout the curriculum, because of the concern that questions which were of the same type used in every session would soon become repetitious and boring for the students. Some of the sessions make use of a line of specific questions which lead in small steps to a large conclusion. Others are content to allow the student to make his or her way through to an understanding of text, once the elements of the text have been identified. Some of the variations in the type of questions are due to the differences among the types of material which is being read. Analysis of narrative material will demand different observations from that of discourse.

The study guides were used in this manner. They were handed out the week preceding their use in class so that the student was not overwhelmed by a large sheaf of paper covering the entire course. Where a student would have to be away for some reason he was given whatever guides would permit him to be current with the rest of the class. The students were instructed to follow the instructions on the sheets, making use of their Bibles, but without the assistance of a commentary. When the class gathered the following week the guides served as direction for the class discussion, with the leader asking the students to share their answers. Where there were divergent views about the answers, or a difference with the understanding proposed by the study guides, the class together engaged in searching the text for the evidence. Where the historical circumstances made a dramatic difference in the interpretation of a text, and the pertinent information

was not contained in the study guides, the leader contributed it. In the case where a seminary-trained leader is not available nothing is demanded which could not be found in a basic handbook to the Bible, or a modern Bible dictionary. The Abingdon Bible Handbook and the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible are excellent examples.²

Additionally there are some notes to the leader of the class at points where they seemed helpful, although there are very few of them. It is thought that the study guides and supportive resources are sufficient for the needs of most classes who might choose to use this resource. There are also introductory sheets which explain the expectations of learners in the study and the intentions of the study, and an outline of Mark's Gospel. That is all the printed materials which accompany the curricular resource.

2. Two parts of study.

The course is divided into two parts. Each of them has a particular function in the whole process of the curricular design. The first is a four-session introduction to the study of Mark's Gospel. In it four distinct elements of Mark's presentation of the gospel are considered: his use of the Old Testament, the pattern of the healing miracles and Mark's use of numbers, the suffering Son of Man, and the Crucifixion-Resurrection of Jesus. This introductory material allows the student to gain an idea of what to look for in the chapter by chapter study which follows. The style of the lessons and the study guides

²Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962); Edward P. Blair, Abingdon Bible Handbook (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975).

is the same as what follows, with the exception that the subject texts are taken from various places in the Gospel.

The second part of the study is an eleven-week sequential study of the text of Mark's Gospel. The English translation which is used as the basis for the questions is the Revised Standard Version, except where the students are introduced to a helpful concept or distinction found only in the Greek text. These are always presented in transliterated form using English characters and thoroughly explained. The segments of the Gospel are of nearly equal length, with slightly larger sections being considered toward the end of the study.

3. Format of each session.

The pattern which was established in the beginning of the course was maintained throughout with only minor variations. In this case the class met on Sunday mornings at seven a.m. at the church. The resource could be used just as well by a group which met in a home or other comfortable meeting place. The group with which the project was experimented was a men's Bible study class formed by the initiation of this course. At the time of this writing it is being used by a women's weekly study class which has met for several years. There has been no need expressed for changes in emphasis or other dimensions of the course, and so it is assumed that it could be used under similar circumstances with other classes of men or women or both.

The students gathered at seven a.m. or in the vicinity of that hour. The first part of the morning was informal fellowship over a simple breakfast. Until 7:20 there was small talk and sharing about events of the week, and on occasion, a discussion about difficulties

encountered in the previous week's study questions. Some of the participants arrived a little early and a larger group were perennially late, but it did not effect the class because of this time of sharing. This part of the format was very important because it permitted the learners to get to know each other in greater depth, finding out about work and family and special interests of each other.

At 7:20 the group would move from the kitchen to the room where the class was held. For this class the room was a comfortable, carpeted classroom with four tables placed in a rectangle and chairs around the perimeter. As soon as everyone was seated one of the participants would be called upon for prayer, specifically invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit upon the gathering and its work. The discussion of the text would follow, under the direction of the leader and the study guide. At 8:20 the group would receive the following week's study guide and form a circle for prayer. This usually took the form of 'conversational prayer,' which simply meant that whoever felt so moved expressed their prayers aloud.³ Following this the group adjourned.

This pattern was repeated every week and provided a rhythm for the study which helped to knit the group into a strong fellowship. Each of the parts of the pattern was deliberate and is believed to have contributed to the favorable response which the course evoked. While the curriculum resource might be used within other circumstances, making use of another pattern, serious attention should be given to the

³See Rosalind Rinker, Prayer: Conversing with God (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

setting. Consistency in the pattern or format of each session will contribute to the class' ability to give full attention to the study of Mark's account of the gospel.

E. CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have focused on the design of the curriculum and the actual use of the curricular resources in a specific context. We began with the four characteristics of adult learners identified by Malcolm Knowles: adults enter learning situations with other than learner's roles, they have more experience to which they relate their learnings, they have a different quality of experience, and they seek more immediate applications of their learnings. Later in the chapter these were seen to effect the design of the format of each session as well as the guidelines which followed the presentation of these characteristics.

After considering the impact that the characteristics of adult learners has, we turned to the four guidelines developed as a response to the concerns lifted in the chapter on standards. There were also four of these which were to influence the design of the curricular resource: the Bible should be the primary text for the study, insofar as possible non-technical language should be used in the resource, the resource should seek to be both scholarly and devotional in its presentation, and the curriculum should focus on what the learners can discover rather than on what they can be told.

From the four guidelines we moved to a discussion of the two 'directions' to the presentation of the content of the curriculum. The first of these was called 'step-by-step' because of its emphasis on the

linear development of the themes of the Gospel. The second was characterized as 'superficial-to-reflective' and described the increasing depth of interpretive tasks of the learners, as well as the demand throughout the study that the students begin with the elemental meaning of the text before moving very far in the hermeneutical task.

After this consideration of the general design of the curricular resource we moved to an examination of the specific elements of the design. We looked at the make up of the weekly study guides and the way in which they were used in the class discussion. That was followed by a description of the two parts of the course: the four-session introduction to several aspects of Mark's Gospel and the eleven-session sequential study of the Gospel.

Finally we described the format of each session and the setting of the class. It was noted that the supportive elements of the format were deemed as important, in some respects, as the actual content of the curricular resource; especially the amenable setting, the opportunity for informal fellowship, and the use of prayer. It was recommended that any alteration of the supportive elements of the study be undertaken carefully with full attention to the purposes of the changes.

This concludes the chapter on the design of the curricular resource. The study guides which are described in this chapter may be found in the appendix.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

In this project we have undertaken the demonstration of the need for an alternative curricular resource for adult Bible study of the Gospel According to Mark. We have also suggested a model for that resource and made proposals for its implementation. The resource was actually developed and used in a local church setting with a group of men, meeting weekly during Epiphany and Lent of 1977, and the results of that use incorporated in the description of the project.

The project began with the recognition that Bible studies for adults need not only to respond to the general characteristics of adult learners, but also to the specific needs of particular groups of adults. In the first chapter we considered the dimensions of the problem of adult Christians' biblical illiteracy, and set out the limitations of this project: it would deal with the specific concerns of a group of persons in one local church in developing a curricular resource for the study of the Bible. It was hoped that a resource which was amenable to the particular concerns of the group for which it was designed might be more effective in meeting their needs for nourishment by the Word. A resource designed for use by a denomination-wide audience might not be able to do that because of lack of specificity.

In the second chapter the standards for the development of a curricular resource suitable for this class were presented in the form of issues raised by the members of the class. This took the form of

two major issues--that the study be simultaneously scholarly and devotional, and that the study encourage the acquisition of the tools of analysis and interpretation by the learners--and five minor issues. The minor issues centered around the makeup of the class: diversity of educational background, diversity of reading ability, diversity of church experience, the need to be racially and sexually inclusive; and one which reflected the concern that the study be open to the fruits of modern scholarship.

These concerns were applied to both United Methodist curricular resources and those of 'non-denominational' publishers. The United Methodist materials satisfied more of the minor issues than did the non-denominational offerings, but were still lacking in the concern to show the learners how to engage in the hermeneutical task for themselves. The non-denominational publishers were clearly seeking to answer concerns which were other than those specified in this project, and in neither major nor minor concerns did they meet the needs of this class. In any case, it became apparent that it was necessary to develop an alternative curricular resource.

After establishing the need for an alternative, we moved to a consideration of the scope of the study. In the third chapter we set out our understanding of the authority of the Bible, and why the Gospel According to Mark was chosen as the subject of the curricular resource. The two primary dimensions of the authority of the Bible which emerged were its significance as a source of dialogue with another person of faith, on who was considerably closer in time and culture to the situation of God's self-manifestation in Jesus Christ, and its function as an avenue of transcendence. By virtue of its distance from us and its

different approach to the issues of faith in God, and the response of faith, it serves to stretch our awareness beyond what is possible without it. In connection with this we considered the importance of Mark's Gospel as a challenge to our excessively individualistic approach to faith and our tendency to diminish the radical nature of discipleship.

Having established the importance of the study of the Bible, and in particular the Gospel of Mark, we moved to a discussion of the intent of Mark as revealed in his Gospel. It was suggested that Mark's main interest was not in telling a connected narrative of Jesus' life and death, but rather in communicating ideas which we would call theological. This was illustrated by the use of three theological concerns evidenced by the Gospel of Mark, with a variety of supporting material from the text of the Gospel.

For Mark, writing to a chiefly gentile audience,¹ it was very important to demonstrate that the salvation which they shared in Jesus Christ was something which God had planned from the beginning, and that Jesus had simply demonstrated God's intention in that regard. The demonstration was the first of Mark's theological concerns. The second related to the question of who this Savior was, and how he fit into both Jewish expectations and gentile understandings. His third theological concern was the demonstration that Jesus is alive and efficacious in the life of his Body, the church. We saw how Mark effectively suggested this by the use of a nature miracle and the healing of a paralytic in a peculiar setting.

¹Although a gentile audience keenly aware of the Jewish scriptures, the "God-fearers" or "God-lovers," who were attracted to the synagogues of the Diaspora.

In the fourth chapter we discussed the actual design of the curricular model; first by placing the characteristics of adult learners into consideration. This was done so that we might have a more balanced set of criteria than possible with only the concerns identified by one particular class. We then combined them with the issues raised in the second chapter, in order to derive several guidelines for the curriculum model. There were four guidelines:

1. The text for the course should be the Bible, and any other curricular material should point to the Bible.
2. The resource should make use of non-technical language.
3. It should be both scholarly and devotional in presentation.
4. It must focus on what the students can discover through study of the text, not what they can be filled with.

In connection with these four guidelines, two directions involved in the presentation of the content of the curriculum were presented. The first direction was characterized as 'step-by-step,' and referred to the intention that the content be presented in manageable units which were connected to each other. The second direction was called 'superficial-to-reflective,' and described the demand of the curricular model that each element of the text be examined in its superficial sense before moving on to substantive interpretation. This was required so as to lessen the influence of prior interpretations which the student might bring to the exercise.

Finally, in the last part of the fourth chapter we moved into a description of the specifics of the design. The first part of this was a description of the home study guides which constitute the main printed resource of the curricular model, and a few comments about their use as a part of the course design. The next part was a discussion of

the structure of the course itself, both the four-session introduction to the study of the Gospel of Mark, and the eleven-session chapter-by-chapter study. We closed with the presentation of the format of each session and a detailed exposition of its various elements.

It might be added in conclusion that the study was well-received by those who participated, and an anticipated problem with the question and answer format did not materialize. Such a format for the study guides could lead to the charge that the curricular model assumes that there is only one 'correct' way of studying the Gospel of Mark. In fact, the vigor with which the process was presented, and its particular viewpoint espoused, only served to encourage the learners to develop their own viewpoints in response. The result was a continually interested group who regularly engaged in animated discussion.²

²As animated as possible at 7 a.m. on Sunday mornings.

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APPENDIX A

Home Study Guides

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

This study of Mark's Gospel has three purposes:

1. to invite you to discipleship; to following the Lord;
2. to deepen your trust in him and commitment to his kingdom;
3. to challenge your intellect and your faith to grow in him.

Since these are Mark's interests in his account of the gospel (Good News) about Jesus Christ, we shall do these three things by following closely the intentions of the Gospel-writer.

There are two parts to our study. First, a four-week overview which will give us a perspective from which to examine the Gospel. Secondly, an eleven-week course in which we will study the Gospel chapter-by-chapter.

You will need the following materials in order to participate fully:

1. A modern translation of the Bible. The Revised Standard Version (RSV) will be cited in the home study lesson, but the New English Bible (NEB), Jerusalem Bible (JB), or New American Standard Bible (NASB) are acceptable. The Good News Bible (TEV) may be used.
2. A three-ring binder which takes pages 8½" x 11", and note paper.
3. The home study questions and outlines which will be available weekly.

As the Body of Christ, we bear responsibility for each other and for the life of the whole fellowship, as well as for our own growth in the Lord. So that we might faithfully take care of each other and help build up the whole Body, it is important that we take care daily for our own growth and that we come prepared to share in the study each week. All who wish to participate in the study are requested to commit to the following discipline:

- attend every Sunday, except in emergency
- spend 20 minutes each day in prayer and Bible study
- practice seeking God's will for the daily decisions of my life, through prayer, listening, and study of the Scriptures
- participate as fully as possible in the fellowship and in the responsibilities which are a part of it.

Your responsibility each week will be to read the assigned material for the following week and answer the study questions. They are designed to draw your attention to elements of the scripture which will be helpful in understanding the intention of the text.

There will be two levels of questions. First, those which simply draw from the surface of the text and encourage you to read what is there and not what you might have heard was there. Second, questions which ask you to draw out of the text, with the help of the Holy Spirit and your own intellect and faith, the purpose of the Evangelist and its meaning for today.

PLEASE NOTE:

Text on pages 85-173 is
printed on colored paper.
Some may not reproduce well
in xerography. Filmed in
the best possible way.

UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS.

According to Mark
Session A

Mark and the Old Testament

Mark assumes an intimate knowledge of the Old Testament (his "Bible") on the part of his hearers. He makes use of Old Testament patterns throughout his gospel to describe the life and meaning of Jesus. If one is to understand fully Mark's purpose, a familiarity with the Old Testament is a must.

It is not necessary to have read the entire Old Testament with understanding before reading Mark. The following are passages which will help make Mark's meaning clear. We will use these and others throughout our study of Mark's Gospel:

Exodus, chapters 1-24, 32-34, 40
Numbers, chapters 1, 3, 11, 14 and 20
Deuteronomy 6, 9, 31 and 34
Joshua 1-10, 24
Psalms 2, 18, 22, 38, 42-45, 65, 69, 74, 77, 78,
80, 89, 91, 105, 106, 109, 110, 118, 136
Isaiah 40-66
Jeremiah 7 (the Temple sermon)

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *

* 1. That what happened in the person of Jesus was a part of *

* God's plan of salvation. *

* 2. That that plan was already known in the Scriptures of the *

* Jewish Bible (our Old Testament). *

* 3. That the Lord has a plan for us today, and we may discover *

* it through the scriptures. *

* * * * *

First, stop. In each of these lessons take time to listen for God's word to you in your study.

1. Turn to the first chapter of Mark. In his first two words he gives us a 'key' to understanding his whole account of the Good News about Jesus Christ.

His first two words are _____.

2. There is another book of the Bible which begins with similar words. It is Genesis (the book of 'Beginnings'). See what the first words of Genesis 1:1 are:

_____.

According to Mark
Session A

3. Mark says in these two words that what he is about to tell us is related to what God has already done, which is reported in the Old Testament. We are alerted that God is about to make a New Beginning.
4. This new beginning is a particular one, however. It has to do with Jesus Christ of Nazareth. By linking up these words, 'beginning' and 'Jesus Christ' Mark tells us that a new charter of salvation is being offered by God in the person of a man: Jesus.

-----Take a moment to reflect on your life. I always seem to be making 'new beginnings' but they are usually partial. When I decided to follow Christ I made one of the few decisive 'new beginnings' of my life. What makes the final difference is that only in the Lord is it possible to be really decisive, for he is the only one whose Word is action and who keeps his promises, no matter what. It is inevitable that I will be 'wishy-washy' as long as I refuse to follow the Holy Spirit, for my decisions are all made in the narrow context of my small world. For a lasting 'new beginning' I need to invite the Lord to lead the way.

5. Read verses 2 and 3 of the first chapter of Mark. They are attributed to the prophet Isaiah, but in fact are a composite of two quotations. The first is from the book of Malachi 3.1 and the second is from Isaiah 40.3. (note: 'Malachi' is Hebrew for 'my messenger' and is not a proper name.)
6. Read Malachi 3.1 and then Malachi 4.5. Who is the messenger who is to come before the Lord comes?

-
7. Read Isaiah 40.3 and 40.10. For whom is a way to be prepared in the wilderness?
-

8. By using these two quotations from his Bible, Mark has set the stage for the appearance of Elijah followed by the appearance of the Messiah of the Lord. Read Mark 1.4-8.

9. What does John the baptizer wear, what does he eat, what preach?
 - a. He wears _____.
 - b. He eats _____.
 - c. He preaches _____.

According to Mark
Session A

10. In the Talmud (a Hebrew community with additional stories about the Hebrew Bible) Elijah is described as clothed with camel's hair, with a leather girdle about his waist, subsisting on locusts and wild honey, preaching repentance. Who does Mark want to tell us that John the baptizer is?

11. Read Mark 9.11-13. After the Transfiguration, the disciples question Jesus about Elijah. Why does he say that "Elijah has already come" (verse 13)?

12. According to Malachi 4.5, who comes after Elijah the prophet comes?

13. Read Mark 1.9. Mark does not have to tell us who Jesus is. He has already done so by his use of quotations and allusions. Is Mark trying to be sneaky? No. For his listeners, who know the Old Testament in detail, it was the most clear and direct way of describing the significance of Jesus. If God was really engaged in saving his people through Jesus, then what happened with Jesus would have to be explainable in terms of the only authoritative revelation of God's saving ways available: the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament).
14. In your own words, summarize what Mark has told us about Jesus.

15. Read the rest of Mark 1 up to the 15th verse.
16. When the Hebrews wanted to tell how God saves his people, they would always point back to the experience of the Exodus. When Isaiah thought that the Messiah was coming, he expressed it in the idea that a new Exodus was about to occur. On the left of the sheet are several elements connected with the Exodus. As you read Mark 1.9-13 write down parallels to the Exodus motifs in the right hand column. See what pattern emerges.

Exodus motifs

Mark 1.9-13

out of Egypt

passing through the waters

According to Mark
Session A

a sojourn in the wilderness

lasts 40 years

Israel tested (in LXX
peirazo is word used,
also means 'tempted')

Israel is fed by God in
desert

---- Freedom from sin, oppression, and guilt are all made available to us in Jesus. All of us are in bondage in one way or another: either our work, our fears and insecurities, our secret thoughts or our past lives. Take a moment to list the things on the back of this sheet which you would like to be free of, which bind you down, or keep you from being fully free.

17. Mark says by using Exodus language that Jesus has taken our bondage and destroyed it. He has gone through the waters which threatened to destroy and come out with a blessing. He has been tempted and tested in the desert and we who are his Body (see Paul) have gone with him.

---- He is willing to drown everything which keeps you back, and makes you less than you could be. Can you let go? Let him take everything you have just listed and bury it in the waters. Let it go and come into the freedom which he has for you and for all people. "For freedom Christ has set us free;" (Galatians 5.1) is how Paul says the same thing as Mark has here in his first chapter. Take a minute now to give thanks to him and ask his further help in enabling you to fully let go of your sin and guilt and give it to him, who has already taken it away...

According to Mark
Session B

Healing Miracles of Jesus

The Gospel according to Mark is meant to be heard rather than read. That is because there are important patterns in the structure of this Gospel as a whole. They are appreciated better by listening than by seeing. By the time that Mark wrote down his gospel no one could say exactly what the chronological order of the events of Jesus' life was. Mark had the opportunity of using not only the individualistic stories about Jesus to call us to faith in him, but also the structure of the whole Gospel. Throughout Mark there are important patterns which help us to understand the significance of Jesus.

```

* * * * *
*
*   IN THIS LESSON: We learn
*   1. That there is a five-fold pattern of the healing miracles
*       in Mark.
*   2. That there are essentially two kinds of healing miracles:
*       a. cleansing
*       b. raising
*   3. That these are the kinds of miracles which Jesus through
*       the Holy Spirit performs in us today.
*
* * * * *

```

First, stop. Reflect on the ways that God brings healing to you. What is your need at this time?

1. Read Mark 1.23-3.6. Concentrate on the five healings contained in these chapters:
 1. the demoniac 2. Simon's mother-in-law 3. the leper
 4. the paralytic and 5. the man with a withered hand.
2. Look to the chart "Healing Miracles of Jesus." It outlines the general pattern of the healing miracles of Jesus. In each of the compartments of the chart (when we have finished this week's work) there will be the following:
 - a. The scripture text-chapter and verses-where the miracle is presented.
 - b. A short description of the situation needing healing or the person healed.
(example: box one, "man with unclean spirit" and box 2, "Simon's mother-in-law")
 - c. special notes about the healing (these will come from our class session)
 - d. whether the person healed is a Gentile or Israelite.
3. You will notice that the first row is complete. We will first go over the information already supplied so that it will be clear how it was determined.

According to Mark
Session B

4. The first healing miracle is of a man with an unclean spirit (1.23-28). In verse 23 the man is described with the word "unclean". Mark thinks that this is so important that two more times he uses this word "unclean" to describe the man. (verses 26 and 27) Since he is in the synagogue it is clear that he is an Israelite. (The significance of this will be made clear later.)
5. Go next to the story of the healing of Simon's mother-in-law (1.29-31). What words are used to describe Jesus' actions toward her?

The Greek says, literally, "He raised her."

6. Since Mark does not say otherwise, as the mother-in-law of an Israelite, we can safely assume that she is an Israelite, and have so noted at the bottom of the box.
7. Go through the other healing miracles in the first row. If you have any questions about how the information was obtained, or how it was determined that this was either a raising miracle or a cleansing miracle, write your questions on the bottom of this sheet.
8. Once you feel that you know how to fill in the boxes, finish off the rest of the chart. It is not necessary to study the individual healing miracles in detail at this time. We are interested in getting a general view of the gospel according to Mark, whereby we can understand the purpose of the gospel when we read it later in depth.
9. You will note that the last three boxes on the page are not healing miracles as such. You do not need to put anything in those sections.

According to Mark
Session B

HEALING MIRACLES OF JESUS				
cleansing	raising	cleansing	raising	raising
<p>1.23-28 man with unclean spirit</p> <p>Holy one of God be silent and come out of him</p> <p>(Israelite)</p>	<p>1.29-31 Simon's mother-in-law 'he...lifted her up'</p> <p>she fed them</p> <p>(Israelite)</p>	<p>1.40-45 leper 'make me clean' if you will</p> <p>(Israelite)</p>	<p>2.1-12 paralytic "Rise." friends</p> <p>(Israelite)</p>	<p>3.1-6 man with withered hand 'rise to the center' <u>egeire</u></p> <p>(Israelite)</p>
5.1-13	5.21-24,35-43	5.24-34	7.24-30	7.31-37
9.14-27	10.46-52	(11.15-19)	(12.18-27)	(13.26)

According to Mark
Session C

Who He Is

In the first two lessons we learned some of the ways that Mark makes use of his Bible (our Old Testament) in order to tell us something about who Jesus is, and how he makes use of the pattern and nature of the healing miracles to tell us what Jesus' work is among us.

There is another level of meaning to the question 'Who is Jesus?' which we will consider in this lesson. Whereas we began at the beginning in the Gospel in the first lesson, this lesson deals with the Good News about Jesus Christ viewed from the end forward. Scholars have long realized that the gospels are meant to be read 'backwards', from the Passion (suffering and death) of Jesus. Someone characterized Mark's gospel as "A Passion narrative with a long introduction."

Although we will not deal with the crucifixion and resurrection specifically until next session, in this lesson we will consider the events leading up to them. Our question throughout this lesson is, "Who is this man, Jesus?"

*
* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *
* 1. That Jesus is the Son of Man, whose suffering and death is *
* a part of God's plan of salvation. *
* 2. That the title "Son of Man" is used to describe Jesus *
* because the old term for the one God sent ('Messiah') can't *
* fully describe who Jesus is. *
* 3. That Jesus' rejection by all persons was necessary that all *
* might be saved. *
*

First, stop - pray "Open me, Lord, to your word. Let me find you here." and be silent a moment.

1. Read Mark 12.1-12. It is the parable of _____.
2. This parable occurs at a turning point in Mark's gospel. It serves to mark the place where those seeking Jesus' life begin to act against him. It summarizes the self-understanding of Jesus and is a synopsis of salvation history.
3. What word in the Old Testament quotation describes what happened to the 'owner's son'? _____
4. In what follows, we will look at those who reject Jesus and see what pattern emerges.

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5. Read Mark 3.20-21. What do Jesus' 'friends' (the word can mean his family as well as his friends) think about Jesus?
-

6. In 3.31-35, what do you suppose that his family are "outside, asking for him" for?
-

(Note: this can only be answered by comparison with the answer to question #5.)

7. Read 5.1-17. What do the Gerasenes ask Jesus to do as a result of the healing of the demoniac?
-

8. Read Mark 6.1-6. What is the response to Jesus in his hometown? (see especially 6.3)
-

9. Who rejects him in 12.12? _____

10. In 14.50 Jesus is rejected by _____

11. In case anyone was missed, in 15.1-13 it is _____

_____ who reject Jesus.

12. In an intensifying progression, Jesus has been rejected by

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

----- Some of us reject the Lord by working against him, undermining the power of faith, in some active way. Others by accepting blindly all we are told without exercising the gifts of intellect and feeling in the pursuit of a fruitful faith. Still others of us reject him through our indifference to him, and to those who he identified with: the poor, crippled, lost, and oppressed people of the earth. The truth which Mark offers us in narrative form is that we all reject the only beautiful reality in human life: God's self-giving love in his Son Jesus. Each of us has rejected him.

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13. Read the three predictions of the Passion which Jesus makes. They are to be found in 8.31; 9.31-32; and 10.33ff. Summarize in a few words here:

1st prediction

2nd prediction

3rd prediction

14. The fact that Jesus predicts his suffering and death suggests that
- ___ a. God knew what humans would do to Jesus, but decided not to do anything about it.
 - ___ b. God was going to make use of the inevitable rejection of his Son.
 - ___ c. Jesus' suffering was an unfortunate, meaningless development.
 - ___ d. or:

----- There is no depth of suffering and rejection which our Lord did not suffer in his life among us. I trust that no matter how bad off I am--no matter what depth I sink to, or indignity and disgrace I face--He has been there before me. In the picturesque language of the creed we say 'he descended into hell' and I know it is true. Even in the Pit, he will rescue me, get me on the road to fellowship with him, and renew me. Think about how Jesus' suffering and death is important to your life.

15. Does the fact that Jesus suffered on our behalf mean that Christians do not have to suffer? _____
16. Read the three passion predictions again. This time continue to the material which follows each: 8.31-38; 9.30-35; and 10.32-40. What follows each prediction of the passion?
- _____

17. What kind of discipleship is demanded of the Christian?
- _____

----- Christianity is an odd religion in the history of religions. Christians spend a considerable amount of time and energy thinking and praying about another life, which we frequently (though not

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Session C

always) call heaven. Yet, even so, our chief affirmation is that when we follow our Lord, it is not out of this life that we follow him, but into the world. We believe that our task is to emulate our Lord in his redemptive self-giving for the world, fully aware that the world will not be able to fully understand or accept our gift, given without conditions. Indeed, we learn from what happened to our Lord that any gift of love, given without strings, is bound to cause resentment and hostility because it challenges the basic premises of a world built on competition and "me first."

18. Read with special care the first prediction of the Passion, this time beginning with 'Peter's confession,' 8.27 and going on through the call to discipleship: 8.35.
19. Does Jesus encourage the disciples to use the title, Christ?
- ___ Yes ___ No
20. Immediately after Peter's confession that he is the Christ, Jesus tells them to say nothing to anyone about it, and immediately begins a statement about whom?
- _____
21. What is the title which Jesus seems to prefer?
- ___ a. Christ (Messiah)
- ___ b. Son of Man
22. From what we have already been seeing about the nature of Jesus' saving task, what would you say is the difference between "Christ" and "Son of Man" as a title for Jesus?
- _____

___ Pray that God would open you to the meaning of suffering in your own life, and make you an instrument of his healing wherever anyone suffers, pray that he will show you who he is and who you can be.

According to Mark
Session D

The central mystery of the Christian faith is the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Something happened to a rag-tag bunch of disciples that stopped their fearful flight and converted them into dynamic apostles for Jesus Christ. They experienced something so profound that it was to propel them into the far corners of their world to proclaim the good news that "Jesus is Lord," and the echoes of their proclamation still reverberate today, nearly 2,000 years later. In this lesson we will hear the evangelist Mark tell us what happened that changed the world.

*
* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *
* 1. That Mark makes use of the Old Testament (especially the *
* Psalms) to show that Jesus' death was not an empty expression *
* of the evil of humans, but a part of the plan of salvation *
* which God has for his people. *
* 2. That the resurrected Lord appears in Mark's gospel, even *
* though the gospel ends at chapter 16, verse 8. *
* 3. That we may meet the Lord in his living reality here and *
* now. *
*

First, stop - pray "Open me, Lord, to your word. Let me meet you here." and be silent until he tells you to go on.

1. Read chapters 14 through 16.8. They describe the accelerating movement towards the crucifixion, the crucifixion itself, and the events at the tomb between the women and the young man in white.
2. Look over the study aids (four pages with Mark 15.21-39 and Old Testament parallels). Careful use of this aid will help you to solve several difficulties which perplex those who are not aware of the importance of the Old Testament to Mark's account of the crucifixion.
3. In 15.23 they offer Jesus wine but he does not take it. Often people suppose that it is because he wants to be clear-headed to the end, and face his sufferings with his faculties intact. Why does Jesus refuse the wine?

-
4. In the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt, God visits 10 plagues upon the Egyptians. The last plague is the death of the first-born and the occasion of the Passover and the Exodus. What is the next-to-last plague? See Exodus 10.31.
-

According to Mark
Session D

5. How long does it last? _____
6. What happens in 15.33 and for how long? _____
7. Look at the readings in Amos which parallel verse 33. What is the event toward which these signs point?

8. The day of the Lord is the time when God brings his salvation to his people. It is also a day of judgment in which the Lord purifies his people, cleansing them of all their sins to make them ready. As Amos reminds us, it is not a lot of fun to have the Lord come, for we are shown up for the pretenders we really are.
9. In 15.34 Jesus cries aloud. His words are a cry of _____.
10. If God was in Christ, then (choose 1)
 ____ a. Jesus was mistaken. God did not forsake him.
 ____ b. Jesus was right and the God in him forsook his humanity, leaving it to suffer death.
 ____ c. Jesus was forsaken, even by God, but it was God the Son who was forsaken by God the Father.
11. God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, faced abandonment, even by God, so that he might identify with the suffering of humanity, and of individual persons. We say in one of the prayers at Holy Communion "By his blood he reconciled us. By his wounds we are healed."
- For our sake, the Lord, our God, faced suffering and death; was subject to total abandonment and died. There was a death within God: the Son died in the flesh, suffering separation from all that all might be brought close; the Father suffered the loss of his only Son that he might not lose any of his children. Out of the suffering of God came the Holy Spirit, bringing healing and life to all who would accept God's offering of himself to us. Stop and pray, now, that you would be open and ready to accept this gift, that you would let God bring you close to him, comforting and cradling your whole self in him.
12. Read all of Psalm 22. This psalm begins with a cry of radical dereliction, but ends in a great hymn of _____.
13. What does the psalmist predict as a consequence of what God is doing (in vv. 27-31)?

According to Mark
Session D

14. What does the gentile centurion confess in Mark 15.39?

15. The word for gentiles in Hebrew is 'goyim' and it is usually translated in the Old Testament as "the nations." Could this confession of the gentile centurion be an instance of "all the families (gentiles)" worshipping the Lord? See Psalm 22.27-28

16. We know that Mark frequently uses a piece of an Old Testament passage to point us to the whole thing. Is this what Mark is doing with these words from Psalm 22 on Jesus' lips?

17. Although the last words of Jesus in Mark are certainly a cry of abandonment, if they are seen as reminding us of the entire psalm, they are also a cry of

18. This is because they point to a time when what shall happen?

19. Do we have a role in bringing "all the families of the nations (to) worship before him"?

The Resurrection

20. Read Mark 14.43-50. What verb is used three times to describe what they do to Jesus?

21. Read 14.51-52. Who is following them? _____

22. What is he wearing? _____ (sindona)
(Note: the Greek word 'sindona' is usually translated 'shroud' and is the same word used to describe what they wrapped Jesus in in 15.46.)

23. They try to _____ him, but he left the sindona and _____
_____ naked.

According to Mark
Session D

24. Read chapter 16. Is the tomb empty? _____
25. Who is in the tomb (besides the women)? _____
26. Where is he seated? _____
27. What is he wearing? _____
28. What happens to Jesus' clothing in 9.3 when he is transfigured?

29. Where does the Lord sit according to the quotation in 12.36?

30. Where does the Son of Man sit in 14.62? _____
31. Why do we never recognize our Lord for who he is? Is it because we are looking for a dead body instead of a living Lord?
- Mark says, "You don't need to look for some fancy miracle in order to see the presence of the Lord. Now that you know the key: that he is right there in your midst, you can look at your life and realize that the resurrected Lord was there all along. And he is surely here now if we look for him where he said he was going. He is leading us into Galilee, the place where mission takes place, where there are those needing healing, cleansing and raising. Now we may follow, for he is alive!"

Mark 15:

- impressed
- 21 And they compelled a passerby
 Simon a Cyrenian
 coming in from the country
 the father of Alexander & Rufus
 to carry his cross
- 22 And they brought him to the
 place called Golgotha
 (which means place of a skull)
- 23 And they offered him wine
 mingled with myrrh;
- but he did not take it.
- 24 And they crucified him
- and divided his garments among
 them, casting lots for them to
 decide what each should take
- 25 And it was the third hour,
 when they crucified him.

Cyrene is on coast of N. Africa
(Libya)

unknown otherwise

Ps. 69.21b
 and for my thirst they gave
 me vinegar to drink

(Mk. 14.25 Truly I say to you, I)
(shall not drink again of the)
(fruit of the vine until that)
(day when I drink it new in the)
(kingdom of God.)

Ps. 22.16 Yea, dogs are round
 about me, a company of evil doers
 encircle me
 They have pierced my hands and
 feet

Ps. 22.18 They divide my garments
 among them, and for my raiment
 they cast lots.

a Gentile?

Prov. 31.6-7

Give strong drink to him who is
perishing and wine to those in
bitter distress;
Let them drink and forget their
poverty, and remember their
misery no more.

26	And the inscription of the charge against him, written over him: "The King of the Jews"		
27	And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left.	Isa. 53.12 because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; (yet he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors)	Mk. 14.24 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.
29	And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Aha, you who would destroy the temple and build it in 3 days, 30 save yourself, and come down from the cross!"	Ps. 22.7 All who see me mock at me, they make mouths at me, they wag their heads; Lam. 2.15 All who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem. Ps. 22.6 Scorned by men and despised by the people	Ps. 109.25 I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me they wag their heads Ps. 69.9 For zeal for thy house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me.
31	Likewise the chief priests mocked him to one another with the scribes, saying, Others he saved: he cannot save himself.	Ps. 22.29c and he who cannot keep himself alive Ps. 69.9b and the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me Ps. 22.29c and he cannot keep himself alive	
32	Let the Christ the king of Israel	Jer. 15.6-9 I am weary of relent- ing says the Lord (about Jerusalem)	

come down from the cross,
that we may see and believe."

Those who were with him
crucified also reviled him.

33 And when the sixth
hour had come,
there was darkness over
the whole land until the
ninth hour.

34 And at the ninth hour
Jesus cried with a loud voice,
"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"
which means
"My God, my God,
why have you forsaken me?"

reflects thinking of Wisdom 2.17-20
"Let us see if what he says is
true, let us see what kind of an
end he himself will have. If the
virtuous man is God's Son, God
will take his part and rescue him
from the clutches of his enemies.
Let us test him by cruelty and
torture, then explore this gentle-
ness of his, and put his endur-
ance to the proof. Let us con-
demn him to a shameful death since
he will be looked after - we have
his word for it.

Amos 8.9 "And on that day," says
the Lord God, "I will make the
sun go down at noon, and darken
the earth in broad daylight."
Amos 8.10 I will make it like
the mourning for an only son.
Amos 5.18 Woe to you who desire
the day of the Lord! Why would
you have the day of the Lord?
It is darkness and not light.

Ps. 22.1 My God, my God, why have
you forsaken me.

Is. 13.9 Behold the day of the Lord
comes...
10c the sun will be dark at its
rising.
Is. 50.3 I clothe the heavens with
blackness, and make sackcloth
their covering
(Ex. 10.21) Moses makes darkness to
stretch over Egypt for 3 days

35 And some of the bystanders
hearing it said,
"Behold, he is calling Elijah."

36 And one ran and,
filling a sponge full of vine-
gar, put it on a reed and gave
it to him to drink, saying
"Wait, let us see whether
Elijah will come to take him
down."

37 And Jesus uttered a loud
cry and expired.

38 And the curtain of the temple
was torn in two from top to
bottom.

39 And when the centurion,
who stood facing him,
saw that he thus breathed
his last, he said
"Truly, this man was God's
son."

Ps. 69.21 They gave me poison for
food and for my thirst they gave
me vinegar to drink

not recognizing what Jesus has
explicitly affirmed in
Mk. 9.12 & 13

Ps. 31.22 I had said in my alarm,
"I am driven far from thy sight."
But thou didst hear my suppli-
cations when I cried to thee for
help.

Ex. 26.31-35; 36.35-38
describes veil

Ps. 22.27 All the ends of the
earth shall remember and turn to
the Lord and all the families of
the nation shall worship before
him.

Ps. 22.28 For dominion belongs to
the Lord, and he rules over the
nations.

Ex. 2.23b and the people of Israel
groaned under their bondage and
cried out for help, and their cry
came up to God.
Ps. 22.5 to thee they cried and
were saved
22.15c Thou dost lay me in the
dust of death
22.24 and he has not hid his
face from him but has heard when
he cried to him.

Compare Mk. 1.1.

"The beginning of the Gospel of
Jesus Christ, the Son of God"

According to Mark
Session I

The Good News According to Mark
Mark 1.1-3.6

In this first session of our chapter-by-chapter study of the Gospel According to Mark we will look at four major sections.

- 1.1-1.13 Prelude and overture (John the Baptizer)
- 1.14-1.34 Beginning of Jesus' ministry
- 1.35-1.45 A specimen day in the ministry of our Lord
- 2.1-3.6 Five stories of conflict

A careful examination of these opening characters will make what follows all the more intelligible. As with each of the lessons our intention is to establish a solid background in the way in which Mark makes his proclamation of the Good News so that further study on your own will be more profitable and so that students can become teachers of the Good News about Jesus Christ.

*
* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *
* 1. How Jesus fits into the plan of salvation revealed in the *
* Old Testament. *
* 2. What the proper attitude and response of a disciple is. *
* 3. Who Jesus is and why he was rejected by the authorities. *
*

First, stop and pray: Lord, in the power of your Holy Spirit, convict me and convert me through the study of your Word.

1. Read Mark 1.1-3.6.
2. Review what you know about the words in the 1st verse:

The beginning:

Good News:

Jesus:

Christ:

God's Son:

3. Recall what we studied about the Old Testament quotation in 1.2+3 (Malachi 3.1 and Isaiah 40.3). Why does it appear here? (What does it tell us about John and Jesus?) _____

According to Mark
Session I

4. The church has long seen a trinitarian situation in 1.9-11. Spell it out in your own words:

5. Mark 1.14-15 is a summary of Jesus' preaching. Put the "Good News from God" in your own words. (Use only what appears here as Jesus' words for your source.)

6. The word "repent" stands for the Greek word "metanoite" which probably reflects Jesus' use of the Aramaic word "shubh." It means "return to God's way" or "turn around" from your involvement in the old world. In chapter 1 this demand of Jesus' is illustrated in part. Where?

7. Why was everyone looking for Jesus (1.37)?

8. Does it appear that he wants people to come to him for that reason?

9. What does the posture and action of the leper in 1.40ff remind you of? What is its importance for us today?

10. There are five stories of conflict in chapter 2 and the first six verses of chapter 3. List them below and describe for each of them a.) the point of the conflict, b.) with whom the conflict exists, and c.) Jesus' line of argument.

According to Mark
Session II

Parables and Power
Mark 3.7-5.43

The fact that Our Lord taught in parables is fairly well-known. What a parable is is far less well-known. In the gospels we have a variety of literary and verbal devices to which the word "parable" is applied. They range from the short epigrammatic sayings to extensive stories (such as the Prodigal Son). In some of them the meaning is clear and they are meant to illustrate a teaching in the clearest and most vivid way possible. In the parables reported in Mark the intent is different. They are told enigmatically so as to cause the listener to stop and ponder...to struggle to get their meaning, and even to misunderstand.

This section also confronts us with three acts of power on the part of Jesus. Acts which are so dramatic in their scope that they demand a decision on our part...the decision of faith.

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *

* 1. About the Lord's teaching in parables, and that he knew he *

* would not be understood by many. *

* 2. Some characteristics out of the Kingdom. *

* 3. That Jesus is God present with his people in power. *

* *

* * * * *

First, stop, pray: Forgive us, Father, when we do not see you present with us. Give us humble hearts so we might accept the power of your Word.

1. Read chapter 4, especially the parables.
2. What does the Lord command us to do first in the parable of the sower?
3. Summarize the message of the parable of the sower for the church.
4. In what situation would this parable have been important to the disciples as a source of encouragement?

According to Mark
Session II

5. Does God want his creatures to see and perceive, hear and understand, turn and be forgiven? (See also Isaiah 6.9-10).
6. The Hebrew world view reflected in Isaiah 6 and in Mark 4.10-12 does not draw a clear distinction between what God wills and what he permits. In consideration of that fact and the statement in Mark 4.22, see if you would change your answer to question 5.
7. Why must we be careful how we regard others? (4.24)
8. If the subject of Mark 4.25 is insight or discernment, what does the parable mean?
9. Does the man in 4.26-29 control what happens to what he sows?
10. Can you make the faith of someone grow by persuasion or argument (or any other direct means)?
11. For you to be a faithful witness to Jesus Christ, do you need to have immediate "results"?
12. What does the parable of the mustard seed tell you about the importance of the things that you do in the name of Jesus Christ?
13. See Daniel 4.10ff and Ezekiel 17.22ff for more on the "birds of the air."
14. Read 4.35-5.43. There are three acts of power which only God could accomplish. List them. Describe what the situation is in each case and what Jesus does as a response.

According to Mark
Session III

Jesus: God/Man
Mark 6.1-7.23

It was inevitable that people would not understand who Jesus was, for God intervening directly in human life is bound to be a disruptive event. What is more astonishing is that some did see through all the misunderstanding surrounding our Lord's sojourn among us to the truth of his presence. In chapter six we have the situation of his nature dealt with in the most direct manner. Read the section with a view to what it says about who Jesus is (God or human being), and also to the way in which people respond to him.

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *

* 1. That all expectations about God are too small and do not *

* encompass the truth...God's truth is always a surprise. *

* 2. That we share with Jesus his humanity. *

* 3. That Jesus shares with us his divinity. *

* * * * *

First, stop, pray: Let me listen, Lord. (and then be still for a time..)

1. Read Mark 6.1-7.23. What was the source of the astonishment in 6.2?
2. Was the problem with how they thought Jesus should act, or with who they thought the Messiah should be?
3. What kind of a Messiah do you think they expected?
4. What kind of a Messiah was Jesus (in contrast)?
5. The Lord does not always come to us in a majestic or supernatural way. Rather, most often he visits us in small things...in quietness or in the bustle of the everyday--for he is Lord of all of life--not just Lord of the high points. Think a little bit about the last time you were really made aware of the Lord...when were you last surprised by joy?

According to Mark
Session III

6. In the sending out of the 12 (Mark 6.6-13) what was their most important resource? (by implication)
7. Read 1 Kings 18 and compare the story of Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel with Mark 6.14-29 (The story of John, Herod, and Herodias). What parallels do you see?
8. Every week the Lord sends us out to serve, bringing good news to those who don't have any and healing. In Mark 6.30-32 the apostles give us a model of how we may be prepared for further ministry each week. What should we do?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
9. When the disciples saw that it was late where they were gathered in the wilderness (6.30-44), what was their reaction?
10. What was Jesus' response?
11. Did they think they had enough resources to do what he demanded?
12. What happened when they brought all they had to Jesus?
13. Mark 6.30-44. In Holy Communion there are four actions which are required in each celebration. (See Mark 14.22 and 1 Corinthians 11.23-24). They are
 1. take (the bread) 2. bless (God) 3. break (the bread)
 4. give (the bread)

If you had to preach a homily on this incident what would you point out about this fact?

14. For Old Testament background on the feedings see Exodus 16, Numbers 11, and 2 Kings 4.42-44. These all show how Jesus fulfilled the expectation of abundance available at the coming of the messiah.
15. Mark 6.45-52. Who is Jesus? The disciples do not understand (6.52) but the reader can. The words translated "It is I" in Mark 6.50 mean literally "I am." See Exodus 3.14 and see what it means.
16. The gospels do not provide much support for anyone who wants to see Jesus as merely a "very good man and example" or to those who want to see only "God disguised as man." For Jesus is both God and man, inseparable, as the stories in this section point out. His hometown neighbors expect God to come in power and they are disappointed when they see the carpenter. The disciples think he is a fine rabbi and they are confronted with one who brings the fullness of the messianic age (when God comes to be with his people). "I am" himself is there....right there beside their little boat. (Write a meditation on the church as a boat using this story in 6.45-5. How about us? Do you tend to minimize his humanity? Or his divinity? Spell out on the back who it is in whom you have your faith.

For the ancients Law was the key to life, for Law was instituted by God. Law was not simply a set of rules that must be kept (although there were literalists who tried to convince others it was so!). Law was a path, a way, by which humans might live in harmony with the created order. As early as the 8th century before Christ, God's prophets (Amos, Hosea) remind the people that it is the spirit of the Law (its intent) in which he is interested...not the letter only. That the people were unable through their own efforts to keep in step with God's intention is clear from the continued appeals of the prophets and finally by Jesus himself.

```

* * * * *
*
*   IN THIS LESSON:  We learn
*
*   1.  The Law has been transformed by God's presence in human life.
*
*   2.  The core of God's Law is devotion to him, not rituals or
*       rules.
*
*   3.  Because the distinction between clean and unclean is
*       demolished, the word is to be preached to the gentiles.
*       Ephesians 3.1-12
*
* * * * *

```

1. Before reading the lesson, write here what you know about Jesus and the Law.
2. Read the seventh chapter of Mark. Jesus accuses the Pharisees of ignoring the command of _____ and keeping instead the commands of _____.
3. His example relates to things vowed to the temple. Moses said:

According to Mark
Session IV

(Ex. 20.12; 21.17; Lev. 20.9; Dt. 5.16) but if someone makes a pledge to the temple of what he would have given to his parents in their old age he cannot be held to the law of _____.

4. Jesus is saying that the Pharisees are pitting _____'s law which relates to temple worship against _____'s law which is concerned with relations between people.
 5. How important is the distinction between "clean" and "unclean" in Jesus' saying? (Mark 7.14ff)
-
6. What would this argument say to those who would hold that the gospel is only for God's chosen people, the Jews, because gentiles do not maintain ritual cleanliness?
 7. Jesus denies that things have any inherent power, either for good or evil. Can you see any significance that Jesus' saying might have about the method of Baptism?
 8. Immediately after this discussion of clean and unclean, Jesus goes where?
- Is this ___ Jewish or ___ gentile territory?
9. For her _____ the Syrophenician woman is told to go home, her daughter is healed.
 10. In Jesus' saying, who must first be fed? _____
(Mark 7.27)
 11. Does it imply that someone will be fed "second?" _____
 12. The Syro-phenician woman was responding to Jesus' implied intention that the whole world would be fed. Summarize how the text shows that.

---- One of the great stories of the Bible is the way in which God first

According to Mark
Session IV

chose a people and prepared a way for them through the wilderness... how he cared for them and made them his own. The new covenant which came to human life in Jesus shows how this care and concern was intended for the whole world, that all might share in the benefits and responsibilities of being God's Chosen People. God came and sought us out, even we who are gentiles and he will not let any perish.

According to Mark
Session V

Bread and Sight
Mark 8

In the eighth chapter two great themes are presented. In the first, an account of a miraculous feeding and subsequent misunderstanding on the part of the disciples is used to show that Jesus demanded that his message be preached to all people, not only the Jews.

The second part includes the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida and Peter's confession and seems to suggest that the two incidents help to interpret each other. The second closes with a collection of sayings of Jesus on discipleship.

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*
*   IN THIS LESSON: We learn
*   1. That the message of salvation is for all nations, gentiles
*      as well as Jews.
*   2. That Jesus is more than just the Christ, the one expected
*      by Israel.
*   3. That salvation is effected through God's suffering love in
*      Jesus.
*
* * * * *

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First, stop. Pray: Lord, let your light shine into my heart.

1. Read Mark 8.1-39. Compare the feeding here with the one in Mark 6.35. In what respects are they the same? different?

2. How many baskets are left over after each of the feedings?
 first _____ second _____

3. The reason the baskets of left-overs are taken up is so that those not at the feast will be able to be fed. What is the significance of the number 12 in the Old Testament?

4. Who does this imply will be fed from the left-overs in the first miraculous feeding?

According to Mark
Session V

5. In Genesis 10 there is to be found "the table of nations." In it are 70 nations. In Acts 6.3, the Apostles choose _____ (number) helpers from the Greek-speaking community in Jerusalem.
6. In acts 13.19 Stephen tells how the Israelites destroyed _____ gentile nations in Canaan.
7. What does this suggest (if anything) about who it is that the 7 baskets of left-overs are intended for?
8. What you have just noticed about the numbers associated with the miraculous feeding Jesus intends for the disciples to notice. To someone who might say (as the disciples did in the early church) "The message of salvation is for Jews. Gentiles must become Jews before they can become Christians," what would this say?
9. Jesus' rebuke of the disciples for having eyes but not seeing, is followed by the healing of the blind man of _____. It is unique as a healing story because the healing takes place _____.
10. There are numerous ways that we might understand this two-part healing of the blind man, but in no way did Mark intend that we think that Jesus didn't do it 'right' in the first place. For those of us who are children in the faith the temptation is to want God to do things on our timetable, which usually means we expect a complete answer now and anything less means that God isn't doing his part. To that attitude this gradual healing brings a word of rebuke.
11. Mark's placement of Peter's confession immediately after the story of the partial healing is deliberate. Does Peter understand fully who Jesus is? _____ What title does Peter use to describe who Jesus is? _____. What title does Peter not understand in connection with Jesus? _____
12. Let us return to verses 11-13. What is the Pharisees' over-riding intention? _____ What do they claim to seek? _____ Have they had a sign? _____ What is it? _____ Read Numbers 11.

According to Mark
Session V

Even after being fed by God in the desert, a wicked generation continued to demand from him a sign. The pharisees in Mark's story are heirs to the blindness of Moses' followers through their wicked refusal to see.

13. Chapter 8 ends with a number of sayings on discipleship which are similar in theme to the description of the Son of Man. In the space below and on the back reflect on the following:
 - a. What is my cross? Have I taken it up to follow Jesus?
 - b. Am I losing my life? or giving it away for Christ's sake?
 - c. Am I ashamed of him?
 - d. What is keeping me from giving myself completely to following him?

According to Mark
Session VI

The Transfiguration and A Healing by Prayer

There are several ways that the transfiguration of our Lord has been approached. One is to see it as a simple historical incident without much special significance except to show the divine side of Jesus. Another sees it as a displaced resurrection appearance, somehow got out of place and inserted here into the career of the earthly Jesus. A third viewpoint sees it as a complicated theological statement which uses the metaphor of transfiguration to point to a deeper meaning of Jesus' presence among human beings. These are not mutually exclusive and the truth is probably to be found in the conjunction of the three.

The second incident is the healing of the boy with the dumb spirit. The historical facts of the situation have receded in this account to take a back seat to the theological interest of the evangelist to lift up the importance of faith, its multi-leveled growth, and the power of Jesus available to those who call upon him and give themselves to him.

Here we also have the second prediction of the passion and resurrection and the identification of Jesus with the Son of Man; the discussion about who shall be first and greatest (in John's gospel this saying occurs with the foot-washing at the last supper); and a saying on the proper way to deal with other denominations, along with a series of teachings on faith and a new way of understanding ethical behavior.

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *

* 1. Jesus is more than an Old Testament prophet or leader, he is *

* the Son of God. *

* 2. Wholeness comes not through our own efforts but through faith *

* in Christ. *

* 3. The way of wholeness (healing) is through suffering and death, *

* and we must not mislead persons about the nature of the *

* Christian faith. *

* * * * *

First, stop and pray that God will let you know him more closely through this lesson.

1. Read the ninth chapter of Mark. Notice that the first verse belongs properly to chapter 8. It says that the Kingdom of God will come when?
2. a. When does the transfiguration happen (9.2)? _____
- b. Find a map of the region around Galilee. What mountain is

According to Mark
Session VI

- there? _____
- c. Jesus takes _____ people with him. Peter, and _____ and _____.
- d. These last two are _____. (relationship)
- e. Once on the mountain what happens to Jesus?
- _____
- f. A voice comes out of a _____, and says
- _____
- g. What does Peter want to build? _____
3. In Exodus 24.17,
- a. How long was Moses on the mountain before the Lord spoke? _____
- b. What mountain is he on? _____
- c. Moses takes three people (who are named) with him. They are Aaron and _____ and _____, who are brothers.
- d. In Exodus 34.19,30, when Moses comes down with the tablets of the testimony, what has happened to his face?
- _____
- e. The Lord calls to Moses out of a _____.
- f. According to Exodus 25.9 what is the subject of the Lord's discussion with Moses? _____
4. Could it be that Mark's account of the transfiguration owes something to this story from Exodus? What? The thing that comes out of this comparison of the similarities is the startling way that the story is different. Just when we expect an affirmation of the comparison between Jesus and Moses, the voice from the cloud says Jesus is _____.
5. When Jesus descends from the mountain, he finds that the disciples are unable to cast out a demon. What does he call them in 9.19?
- _____

According to Mark
Session VI

6. What does Moses find when he comes down off the mountain the first time? Are the people waiting faithfully for his return?

(Exodus 32.9) _____
7. Compare Numbers 14.11 with the statement of chastisement in Mark 9.19. What do you notice?
8. According to Jesus what was lacking on the part of the disciples?
(see 9.23)

9. What kind of faith? Faith in what? _____
10. Why couldn't the disciples cast it out? _____
11. Summarize below the subjects of the teaching section which begins on the road to Capernaum. Also describe the main point of each saying:

According to Mark
Session VII

Chapter Ten

Chapter 10 is particularly interesting because of its relationship to the book of Deuteronomy and its laws. It is as though Jesus were setting out a little commentary on the fifth book of the Bible in his actions and teachings here (as in fact he is.) It would be profitable to recall St. Paul's reflections on the Law while reading this chapter, for it is similar in many respects.

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* * * * *
*
* IN THIS LESSON: We learn
* 1. That Jesus considers the protection of the poor, the defense-
*    less, and the oppressed to be of primary importance.
* 2. That Christians follow a Way which includes suffering and even
*    death, just as our Lord.
* 3. That faith does not go unrewarded.
*
* * * * *

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I hope that you have been approaching this study with prayer as a guide. Before you answer any questions pray quietly that God will help your understanding, and then read slowly through the chapter. Take time to mull over anything which strikes you or which does not yield right away to your understanding.

1. This teaching in Mark 10.1-12 is a good example of how the cultural situation makes a difference in the significance of a biblical passage. Would it make a difference in your understanding of this teaching if you knew that in Jesus' day a woman was considered to be property, and the husband had a right to send the woman away for any reason? Since women could not own property or make contracts, an unmarried woman might be literally in danger of starving unless she became a prostitute. Compare the usual way of understanding this passage with one which takes into consideration the cultural context.
2. The story of the children coming to Jesus is frequently treated in a sentimental, romantic way. Read Deuteronomy 24. Who does it declare to be the concern of the Lord?
3. Thus the children might be seen as those who are (check one)
 - ☐ a. naive and innocent
 - ☐ b. young
 - ☐ c. powerless and poor
 - ☐ d. other (specify)

According to Mark
Session VII

4. Read the story of the man with great possessions (10.17-22). He is the ancient counterpart of the persons today who say, "If people would just keep the ten commandments, then we would have heaven on earth." How does this story relate to the saying about the children?
5. Why is it so hard for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom?
6. Verse 31 summarizes this section and leads into the third foretelling of the passion. What promise does Jesus make to those who are willing to give up their craving to be first in this world?
7. What are those who follow Jesus into Jerusalem experiencing? (10.32)
_____ and _____
8. What emotions are expressed by those who come to the tomb in chapter 16? The women are _____ and the young man says to them, "do not be _____." They say nothing to anyone because they are _____. Do you think that Mark's choice of these words here is accidental?
9. In Jesus' response to James and John's request for status, what do the cup and baptism represent?
10. In Joshua 2, as they prepare to enter into the Promised Land, the two spies sent to the town of _____ stay with a harlot named Rahab. Her faith in the promises of the Lord to his people results in her and her family being saved. In the story of blind Bartimaeus Jesus is on his way down to Jerusalem and they enter _____. When the blind man is healed, Jesus says, "Because of your _____ you have been saved." (The same Greek word can be translated either saved or made whole.)
11. In Aramaic the word "bar" means "son of." What is funny about the name of the blind man and the description of his parentage?

According to Mark
Session VIII

Promises, Faith, and Authority

It may be possible to understand how to read Mark from seeing how he handles the material which comes to him. An example might be found in the parable of the sower (Mark 4). We know from other sources that the parables were probably told at first with two purposes: 1. to illustrate a single, major idea; and 2. to be as clear as possible, using the experiences of the listeners for raw material. In time the parables came to be fixed in form (from continuous re-telling) and their significance expanded. They assumed an allegorical quality and the details of the parable were given specific meanings. As the tellers became further removed from the living situation of rural Palestine, the assumption grew that the parables had a mysterious purpose and that they demanded a secret information not commonly available. It is this stage of their development which is reflected in Mark's treatment of the parable of the sower with its allegorical interpretation.

If Mark handles other materials as he handles the parables, then we might be benefited by looking at some of his stories for their allegorical significance, asking to what theological purpose is Mark putting the stories in his gospel.

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* * * * *
*
*   IN THIS LESSON: We focus on
*   1. God's promises to the Jews and the reason they have been
*       expanded to include the Gentiles.
*   2. The power of faith, and the necessity of forgiveness.
*   3. The opposition to Jesus and a God's-eye view of its
*       significance.
*
* * * * *

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First, take a moment. Don't rush into this. The answers aren't important. What is important is your intention to seek God and him only. Pray silently for a moment affirming your desire to encounter the living Lord in this chapter of the Word.

1. Read Mark 11.1-10. Compare it with Zechariah 9.9 and 14.4. To what event do these prophecies point? How has Mark used his allusions to these prophecies?

2. How does Jesus know that a colt such as he describes will be waiting? (do not guess; seek an answer, if there is one, in the text)

According to Mark
Session VIII

3. Does Mark have the great crowds welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem as Matthew, Luke and John do? (see Matthew 21.9, Luke 19.37-38, and John 12.12-13)

4. The people bless both the one who comes and the _____
_____ which is coming. (Note: possibility
festival of Succoth here implied 6 nights before Passover.)

5. We have learned in the course of this study that (a) Mark wants to explain why the promises to the Jews have been passed to the gentiles, and (b) he uses 'sandwiches' (the interpolation of a section of written material between the two halves of another incident) to encourage the reader to use each of the incidents to interpret the other.

Here's the bonus question:

What is Mark saying in the 'sandwich' of the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple? 11.12-11.21. You might look at these questions to help get to the big one:

1. Who or what does the fig tree represent?
2. What is a robber's den?
3. Who are "all peoples?"
4. Who is the temple for?
5. What is the significance of bearing or not bearing fruit?
6. In these apothegms of Jesus how powerful is faith? What is faith for? Mark 11.22ff.

7. What is the intention of the story about the challenge to Jesus' authority in its present setting? Does it simply show that Jesus is cleverer than his opponents or is there more? Mark 11.27-33.

8. In the light of what we have said about Mark's handling of the parables, distinguish between the probable original import of the story of the wretched tenants and the importance it has for Mark's time.

According to Mark
Session IX

Mark 12.13-13.37

This week we look at two major sections: a controversy section in which Jesus faces a number of questioners and deals with the questions of tribute to the Roman authorities; the nature of the resurrection; the greatest commandment, and the Davidic lineage of the Messiah. He warns against hyper-piety for show and illustrates by an example the nature of real piety.

The second section is found in chapter 13 and is sometimes called the little apocalypse. It is introduced by the prediction of the fall of the Temple and continues with predictions about the last days, including the persecutions which the disciples will face and the predictions of the coming of the Son of Man in glory. It ends with the exhortation to "Watch!" for we do not know when the Master will come.

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* * * * *
*
*   IN THIS LESSON: We see
*   1. Jesus revealing a way of approaching life and a style of
*       theological reflection.
*   2. Some key teachings of Jesus interpreted by the early church.
*   3. How to deal with those who try to promote a date for the end
*       of history.
*
* * * * *

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As you pray through this lesson, ask two questions: what is Mark saying about Jesus, and what does he have to say to me?

1. Read Mark 12.13-17. What is God's and what is Caesar's?

2. Read Mark 12.18-27. Summarize how Jesus argues for the resurrection.

3. Read Mark 12.28-34. What is significant about a scribe responding to Jesus' statement that he was 'not far' from it?

According to Mark
Session IX

4. Read Mark 12.35-37. What does Jesus say about the claim that the Messiah would be an heir of David's?

5. Read Mark 12.38-44. This is a warning against those who:

What comment does it make about outward respectability?

6. Compare Jesus' saying in Mark 12.44 with John Wesley's dictum: 'Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.'

7. Read Mark 13.1-27. Does it seem to encourage those who look for signs of the end or discourage them?

8. Summarize the main points of Jesus' discourse here:

13.1-4

13.5-13

13.14-23

13.24-27

9. Read Mark 13.28-37. Does this section seem to encourage those who look for signs of the end or not?

10. Summarize the main points of Jesus' sayings here:

According to Mark
Session X

Mark 14.1-14.41

We have come to the Passion and Crucifixion of our Lord. It is special in several respects which should become apparent as we go through it.

In our consideration of the Passion we will not focus our questions on the specific incidents to the extent which we have done so thus far in our story of Mark's gospel. Rather, it is important to get a feel for the rhythm and movement of the passion and crucifixion accounts. They ought to become a part of you and you a part of them. You are encouraged to read chapters 14 and 15 straight through several times without analyzing what you read, simply noticing what occurs to you each time through. Make your reading your prayer and pray these chapters.

1. Do that now and place whatever observations come to you here before reading further in the assignment:

2. Did you notice anything about the time sequence which is portrayed? The special notations of time? How long does the whole passion and crucifixion take?

3. What is the tone of the whole account? How is it developed?

Answer the last two questions on the back:

4. What are the incidents which stand out in the passion and crucifixion? List them in order and summarize what Mark has to say about how and why Jesus died and what it means. (read Psalm 22 also.)

5. What does it mean to you that Jesus was betrayed into the hands of the authorities and crucified?

According to Mark
Session XI

The Resurrection
Mark 15.42-16.8

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the event which constitutes Christianity. Without the resurrection, Paul says, then our faith is in vain and our hope is in vain. Mark does not attempt to give the 'evidence' of the resurrection in the way we usually think of evidence. He gives the meaning of the resurrection and the effect of it, which is evidence enough for those who live in Christ. When we live in him then we experience the power of his raising again to life, and know it as a present reality and not only an historical event. As you read these few verses--first the somber and moving story of Joseph of Arimathea, and then the encounter of the women with the young man in the tomb--let them move in you. Pray that the living Lord will reveal himself to you.

The following questions are essentially the same as those from session D which relate to the same verses.

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *
 * that he who they tried to kill conquered death, and that we shall *
 * find the Lord going on ahead of us as we seek to serve him. *
 * * *

* * * * *

1. Read Mark 14.43-50. What verb is used three times to describe what they do to Jesus?

2. Read Mark 14.51-52. Who is following them?
 What is he wearing?
 They try to _____ him, but he left the shroud and _____ naked.

3. Read chapter 16, verses 1-8. Is the tomb empty?
 Who is in the tomb (besides the women?)
 Where is he seated?
 What is he wearing?

4. What happens to Jesus' clothing in Mark 9.3 when he is transfigured?

Where does the Lord sit (according to 12.36)?

Where does the Son of Man sit in 14.62?

What is the reaction of the women to his words in 16.8?

APPENDIX B

Teacher's Guides

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

This study of Mark's Gospel has three purposes:

1. to invite you to discipleship; to following the Lord;
2. to deepen your trust in him and commitment to his kingdom;
3. to challenge your intellect and your faith to grow in him.

Since these are Mark's interests in his account of the gospel (Good News) about Jesus Christ, we shall do these three things by following closely the intentions of the Gospel-writer.

There are two parts to our study. First, a four-week overview which will give us a perspective from which to examine the Gospel. Secondly, an eleven-week course in which we will study the Gospel chapter by chapter.

You will need the following materials in order to participate fully:

1. A modern translation of the Bible. The Revised Standard Version (RSV) will be cited in the home study lesson, but the New English Bible (NEB), Jerusalem Bible (JB), or New American Standard Bible (NASB) are acceptable. The Good News Bible (TEV) may be used.
2. A three-ring binder which takes pages 8½" x 11", and note paper.
3. The home study questions and outlines which will be available weekly.

As the Body of Christ, we bear responsibility for each other and for the life of the whole fellowship, as well as for our own growth in the Lord. So that we might faithfully take care of each other and help build up the whole Body, it is important that we take care daily for our own growth and that we come prepared to share in the study each week. All who wish to participate in the study are requested to commit to the following discipline:

- attend every Sunday, except in emergency
- spend 20 minutes each day in prayer and Bible study
- practice seeking God's will for the daily decisions of my life, through prayer, listening, and study of the Scriptures
- participate as fully as possible in the fellowship and in the responsibilities which are a part of it.

Your responsibility each week will be to read the assigned material for the following week and answer the study questions. They are designed to draw your attention to elements of the scripture which will be helpful in understanding the intention of the text.

There will be two levels of questions. First, those which simply draw from the surface of the text and encourage you to read what is there and not what you might have heard was there. Second, questions which ask you to draw out of the text, with the help of the Holy Spirit and your own

intellect and faith, the purpose of the Evangelist and its meaning for today.

According to Mark
Session A
Leader's Guide

Mark and the Old Testament

Mark assumes an intimate knowledge of the Old Testament (his "Bible") on the part of his hearers. He makes use of Old Testament patterns throughout his gospel to describe the life and meaning of Jesus. If one is to understand fully Mark's purpose, a familiarity with the Old Testament is a must.

It is not necessary to have read the entire Old Testament with understanding before reading Mark. The following are passages which will help make Mark's meaning clear. We will use these and others throughout our study of Mark's Gospel:

Exodus, chapters 1-24, 32-34, 40
Numbers, chapters 1, 3, 11, 14 and 20
Deuteronomy 6, 9, 31 and 34
Joshua 1-10, 24
Psalms 2, 18, 22, 38, 42-45, 65, 69, 74, 77, 78, 80, 89,
91, 105, 106, 109, 110, 118, 136
Isaiah 40-66
Jeremiah 7 (the Temple sermon)

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *

* 1. That what happened in the person of Jesus was a part of *

* God's plan of salvation. *

* 2. That that plan was already known in the Scriptures of the *

* Jewish Bible (our Old Testament). *

* 3. That the Lord has a plan for us today, and we may discover *

* it through the scriptures. *

* * * * *

First, stop. In each of these lessons take time to listen for God's word to you in your study.

1. Turn to the first chapter of Mark. In his first two words he gives us a 'key' to understanding his whole account of the Good News about Jesus Christ.

His first two words are The beginning.

2. There is another book of the Bible which begins with similar words. It is Genesis (the book of 'Beginnings'). See what the first words of Genesis 1:1 are:

In the beginning.

According to Mark
Session A
Leader's Guide

3. Mark says in these two words that what he is about to tell us is related to what God has already done, which is reported in the Old Testament. We are alerted that God is about to make a New Beginning.
4. This new beginning is a particular one, however. It has to do with Jesus Christ of Nazareth. By linking up these words, 'beginning' and 'Jesus Christ' Mark tells us that a new charter of salvation is being offered by God in the person of a man: Jesus.

-----Take a moment to reflect on your life. I always seem to be making 'new beginnings' but they are usually partial. When I decided to follow Christ I made one of the few decisive 'new beginnings' of my life. What makes the final difference is that only in the Lord is it possible to be really decisive, for he is the only one whose Word is action and who keeps his promises, no matter what. It is inevitable that I will be 'wishy-washy' as long as I refuse to follow the Holy Spirit, for my decisions are all made in the narrow context of my small world. For a lasting 'new beginning' I need to invite the Lord to lead the way.

5. Read verses 2 and 3 of the first chapter of Mark. They are attributed to the prophet Isaiah, but in fact are a composite of two quotations. The first is from the book of Malachi 3.1 and the second is from Isaiah 40.3. (note: 'Malachi' is Hebrew for 'my messenger' and is not a proper name.)
6. Read Malachi 3.1 and then Malachi 4.5. Who is the messenger who is to come before the Lord comes?

Elijah

7. Read Isaiah 40.3 and 40.10. For whom is a way to be prepared in the wilderness?

The Lord

8. By using these two questions from his Bible, Mark has set the stage for the appearance of Elijah followed by the appearance of the Messiah of the Lord. Read Mark 1.4-8.
9. What does John the baptizer wear, what does he eat, what preach?
 - a. He wears camel's hair, leather girdle around waist.
 - b. He eats locusts and wild honey.
 - c. He preaches a baptism of repentance for sins.

According to Mark
Session A
Leader's Guide

10. In the Talmud (a Hebrew community with additional stories about the Hebrew Bible) Elijah is described as clothed with camel's hair, with a leather girdle about his waist, subsisting on locusts and wild honey, preaching repentance. Who does Mark want to tell us that John the baptizer is?

Elijah

11. Read Mark 9.11-13. After the Transfiguration, the disciples question Jesus about Elijah. Why does he say that "Elijah has already come" (verse 13)?

John is Elijah

12. According to Malachi 4.5, who comes after Elijah the prophet comes?

The Lord

13. Read Mark 1.9. Mark does not have to tell us who Jesus is. He has already done so by his use of quotations and allusions. Is Mark trying to be sneaky? No. For his listeners, who know the Old Testament in detail, it was the most clear and direct way of describing the significance of Jesus. If God was really engaged in saving his people through Jesus, then what happened with Jesus would have to be explainable in terms of the only authoritative revelation of God's saving ways available: the Hebrew Bible (our Old Testament).

14. In your own words, summarize what Mark has told us about Jesus.

Jesus is the Lord's Messiah - come just as expected

15. Read the rest of Mark 1 up to the 15th verse.

16. When the Hebrews wanted to tell how God saves his people, they would always point back to the experience of the Exodus. When Isaiah thought that the Messiah was coming, he expressed it in the idea that a new Exodus was about to occur. On the left of the sheet are several elements connected with the Exodus. As you read Mark 1.9-13 write down parallels to the Exodus motifs in the right hand column. See what pattern emerges.

Exodus motifs

Mark 1.9-13

out of Egypt

out of Nazareth by Galilee

passing through the waters

baptized in Jordan/came up out of waters

According to Mark
Session A
Leader's Guide

a sojourn in the wilderness *immediately into wilderness*

lasts 40 years *40 days*

Israel tested (in LXX *tempted*
peirazo is word used,
also means 'tempted')

Israel is fed by God in *angels ministered to him*
desert

---- Freedom from sin, oppression, and guilt are all made available to us in Jesus. All of us are in bondage in one way or another: either our work, our fears and insecurities, our secret thoughts or our past lives. Take a moment to list the things on the back of this sheet which you would like to be free of, which bind you down, or keep you from being fully free.

17. Mark says by using Exodus language that Jesus has taken our bondage and destroyed it. He has gone through the waters which threatened to destroy and come out with a blessing. He has been tempted and tested in the desert and we who are his Body (see Paul) have gone with him.

---- He is willing to drown everything which keeps you back, and makes you less than you could be. Can you let go? Let him take everything you have just listed and bury it in the waters. Let it go and come into the freedom which he has for you and for all people. "For freedom Christ has set us free;" (Galatians 5.1) is how Paul says the same thing as Mark has here in his first chapter. Take a minute now to give thanks to him and ask his further help in enabling you to fully let go of your sin and guilt and give it to him, who has already taken it away...

According to Mark
Session B

Healing Miracles of Jesus

The Gospel according to Mark is meant to be heard rather than read. That is because there are important patterns in the structure of this Gospel as a whole. They are appreciated better by listening than by seeing. By the time that Mark wrote down his gospel no one could say exactly what the chronological order of the events of Jesus' life was. Mark had the opportunity of using not only the individualistic stories about Jesus to call us to faith in him, but also the structure of the whole Gospel. Throughout Mark there are important patterns which help us to understand the significance of Jesus.

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* * * * *
*
*   IN THIS LESSON: We learn
*   1. That there is a five-fold pattern of the healing miracles
*       in Mark
*   2. That there are essentially two kinds of healing miracles:
*       a. cleansing
*       b. raising
*   3. That these are the kinds of miracles which Jesus through
*       the Holy Spirit performs in us today.
*
* * * * *

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First, stop. Reflect on the ways that God brings healing to you. What is your need at this time?

1. Read Mark 1.23-3.6. Concentrate on the five healings contained in these chapters:
 1. the demoniac 2. Simon's mother-in-law 3. the leper
 4. the paralytic and 5. the man with a withered hand.
2. Look to the chart "Healing Miracles of Jesus." It outlines the general pattern of the healing miracles of Jesus. In each of the compartments of the chart (when we have finished this week's work) there will be the following:
 - a. The scripture text-chapter and verses-where the miracle is presented.
 - b. A short description of the situation needing healing or the person healed.
(example: box one, "man with unclean spirit" and box 2, "Simon's mother-in-law")
 - c. special notes about the healing (these will come from our class session)
 - d. whether the person healed is a Gentile or Israelite.
3. You will notice that the first row is complete. We will first go over the information already supplied so that it will be clear how it was determined.

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4. The first healing miracle is of a man with an unclean spirit (1.23-28). In verse 23 the man is described with the word "unclean". Mark thinks that this is so important that two more times he uses this word "unclean" to describe the man. (verses 26 and 27) Since he is in the synagogue it is clear that he is an Israelite. (The significance of this will be made clear later.)
5. Go next to the story of the healing of Simon's mother-in-law (1.29-31). What words are used to describe Jesus' actions toward her?

came, took her by hand, raised her up

The Greek says, literally, "He raised her."

6. Since Mark does not say otherwise, as the mother-in-law of an Israelite, we can safely assume that she is an Israelite, and have so noted at the bottom of the box.
7. Go through the other healing miracles in the first row. If you have any questions about how the information was obtained, or how it was determined that this was either a raising miracle or a cleansing miracle, write your questions on the bottom of this sheet.
8. Once you feel that you know how to fill in the boxes, finish off the rest of the chart. It is not necessary to study the individual healing miracles in detail at this time. We are interested in getting a general view of the gospel according to Mark, whereby we can understand the purpose of the gospel when we read it later in depth.
9. You will note that the last three boxes on the page are not healing miracles as such. You do not need to put anything in those sections.

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HEALING MIRACLES OF JESUS

cleansing	raising	cleansing	raising	raising
1.23-28 (1) man with unclean spirit Holy one of God be silent and come out of him (Israelite)	1.19-31 (2) Simon's mother-in-law 'he...lifted her up' she fed them (Israelite)	1.40-45 (3) leper 'make me clean' if you will (Israelite)	2.1-12 (4) paralytic "Rise" friends (Israelite)	3.1-6 (5) man with withered hand 'rise to the center' <u>egeire</u> (Israelite)
5.1-13 (6) demoniac - Legion (in David's Israelite kingdom)	5.21-24, 35-43 (7) Jairus' daughter 12 years old give her something to eat Israelite	5.24-34 (8) woman with hemorrhage 12 years crowd scene Israelite	7.31-37 (9) deaf-mute (ears-tongue) 7.24-30 Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter Gentile	8.22-26 (10) Blind man of Bethsaida (eyes) Israelite
9.14-27 (11) demoniac deaf and dumb Israelite	10.46-52 (12) Blind Bartimaeus Israelite	(11.15-19) Temple cleansing 'for all nations'	(12.18-27) Resurrection Prediction	(13.26) Return of Christ Prediction

Additional Notes

Mark is making use of an Old Testament pattern for the entire structure of his Gospel.

Read Numbers 1.20,22,24,26,28,30,32,34,36,38,40,42

How many tribes? 12 Read Numbers 1.47-49. Levi was a tribe also, but was not to be counted. So there are really 13 tribes of Israel, one of which--Levi--was not counted.

How many healing miracles? 13 How many Israelites? 12

How many gentiles? 1

Note: When Mark thinks of Israel he thinks of the boundaries described as part of David's kingdom. Thus Legion's expulsion/cleansing is still to be counted as Israelite.

Also observe the calling of the disciples, particularly Levi (Mark 2. 13-14). Compare it with the list of disciples in Mark 3.14-19. Notice there is no one by the name of Levi. If Matthew also bore the name Levi (as some have suggested) wouldn't he be described as "son of Alphaeus" rather than James?

Although the composition of "the Twelve" probably changed throughout Jesus' ministry, in this case Mark simply wants to affirm the Jesus represents the "New Israel" and parallels it even to the extent of "not counting Levi" who would be the 13th disciple.

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Who He Is

In the first two lessons we learned some of the ways that Mark makes use of his Bible (our Old Testament) in order to tell us something about who Jesus is, and how he makes use of the pattern and nature of the healing miracles to tell us what Jesus' work is among us.

There is another level of meaning to the question 'Who is Jesus?' which we will consider in this lesson. Whereas we began at the beginning in the Gospel in the first lesson, this lesson deals with the Good News about Jesus Christ viewed from the end forward. Scholars have long realized that the gospels are meant to be read 'backwards', from the Passion (suffering and death) of Jesus. Someone characterized Mark's gospel as "A Passion narrative with a long introduction."

Although we will not deal with the crucifixion and resurrection specifically until next session, in this lesson we will consider the events leading up to them. Our question throughout this lesson is, "Who is this man, Jesus?"

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *

* 1. That Jesus is the Son of Man, whose suffering and death is *

* a part of God's plan of salvation. *

* 2. That the title "Son of Man" is used to describe Jesus *

* because the old term for the one God sent ('Messiah') can't *

* fully describe who Jesus is. *

* 3. That Jesus' rejection by all persons was necessary that all *

* might be saved. *

* * * * *

First, stop - pray "Open me, Lord, to your word. Let me find you here." and be silent a moment.

1. Read Mark 12.1-12. It is the parable of the horrible tenants.
2. This parable occurs at a turning point in Mark's gospel. It serves to mark the place where those seeking Jesus' life begin to act against him. It summarizes the self-understanding of Jesus and is a synopsis of salvation history.
3. What word in the Old Testament quotation describes what happened to the 'owner's son'? rejected
4. In what follows, we will look at those who reject Jesus and see what pattern emerges.

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5. Read Mark 3.20-21. What do Jesus' 'friends' (the word can mean his family as well as his friends) think about Jesus?

crazy - 'beside himself' - out of his mind

6. In 3.31-35, what do you suppose that his family are "outside, asking for him" for?

they want to take him away so he'll quit being an embarrassment

(Note: this can only be answered by comparison with the answer to question #5.)

7. Read 5.1-17. What do the Gerasenes ask Jesus to do as a result of the healing of the demoniac?

leave, depart

8. Read Mark 6.1-6. What is the response to Jesus in his hometown? (see especially 6.3)

took offense at him

9. Who rejects him in 12.12? chief priests and scribes

10. In 14.50 Jesus is rejected by disciples

11. In case anyone was missed, in 15.1-13 it is the crowd -

multitude who reject Jesus.

12. In an intensifying progression, Jesus has been rejected by

1. *friends*

4. *head priests and scribes*

2. *family*

5. *disciples*

3. *Gerasenes*

6. *people*

---- Some of us reject the Lord by working against him, undermining the power of faith, in some active way. Others by accepting blindly all we are told without exercising the gifts of intellect and feeling in the pursuit of a fruitful faith. Still others of us reject him through our indifference to him, and to those who he identified with: the poor, crippled, lost, and oppressed people of the earth. The truth which Mark offers us in narrative form is that we all reject the only beautiful reality in human life: God's self-giving love in his Son Jesus. Each of us has rejected him.

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13. Read the three predictions of the Passion which Jesus makes. They are to be found in 8.31; 9.31-32; and 10.33ff. Summarize in a few words here:

1st prediction	2nd prediction	3rd prediction
<i>Son of Man suffer rejected by elders and chief priests killed, raised</i>	<i>Son of Man delivered into hands of men kill him 3 days will rise</i>	<i>in Jerusalem Son of Man delivered to chief priests and scribes condemn him to death deliver to Gentiles mock him, spit on him, scourge him, kill him after 3 days rise</i>

14. The fact that Jesus predicts his suffering and death suggests that
- ☐ a. God knew what humans would do to Jesus, but decided not to do anything about it.
 - ☒ b. God was going to make use of the inevitable rejection of his Son.
 - ☐ c. Jesus' suffering was an unfortunate, meaningless development.
 - ☐ d. or:

---- There is no depth of suffering and rejection which our Lord did not suffer in his life among us. I trust that no matter how bad off I am--no matter what depth I sink to, or indignity and disgrace I face--He has been there before me. In the picturesque language of the creed we say 'he descended into hell' and I know it is true. Even in the Pit, he will rescue me, get me on the road to fellowship with him, and renew me. Think about how Jesus' suffering and death is important to your life.

15. Does the fact that Jesus suffered on our behalf mean that Christians do not have to suffer? no
16. Read the three passion predictions again. This time continue to the materials which follows each: 8.31-38; 9.30-35; and 10.32-40. What follows each prediction of the passion?

call to discipleship

17. What kind of discipleship is demanded of the Christian?

pick up cross

---- Christianity is an odd religion in the history of religions. Christians spend a considerable amount of time and energy thinking and praying about another life, which we frequently (though not

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always) call heaven. Yet, even so, our chief affirmation is that when we follow our Lord, it is not out of this life that we follow him, but into the world. We believe that our task is to emulate our Lord in his redemptive self-giving for the world, fully aware that the world will not be able to fully understand or accept our gift, given without conditions. Indeed, we learn from what happened to our Lord that any gift of love, given without strings, is bound to cause resentment and hostility because it challenges the basic premises of a world built on competition and "me first."

18. Read with special care the first prediction of the Passion, this time beginning with 'Peter's confession,' 8.27 and going on through the call to discipleship: 8.35.

19. Does Jesus encourage the disciples to use the title, Christ?

☐ Yes ☒ No

20. Immediately after Peter's confession that he is the Christ, Jesus tells them to say nothing to anyone about it, and immediately begins a statement about whom?

Son of Man

21. What is the title which Jesus seems to prefer?

☐ a. Christ (Messiah)

☒ b. Son of Man

22. From what we have already been seeing about the nature of Jesus' saving task, what would you say is the difference between "Christ" and "Son of Man" as a title for Jesus?

Son of Man must suffer in order to be instrument of God's salvation

- Pray that God would open you to the meaning of suffering in your own life, and make you an instrument of his healing wherever anyone suffers, pray that he will show you who he is and who you can be.

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The central mystery of the Christian faith is the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Something happened to a rag-tag bunch of disciples that stopped their fearful flight and converted them into dynamic apostles for Jesus Christ. They experienced something so profound that it was to propel them into the far corners of their world to proclaim the good news that "Jesus is Lord," and the echoes of their proclamation still reverberate today, nearly 2,000 years later. In this lesson we will hear the evangelist Mark tell us what happened that changed the world.

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *
 * 1. That Mark makes use of the Old Testament (especially the *
 * Psalms) to show that Jesus' death was not an empty expression *
 * of the evil of humans, but a part of the plan of salvation *
 * which God has for his people. *
 * 2. That the resurrected Lord appears in Mark's gospel, even *
 * though the gospel ends at chapter 16, verse 8. *
 * 3. That we may meet the Lord in his living reality here and *
 * now. *
 * * * * *

First, stop - pray "Open me, Lord, to your word. Let me meet you here." and be silent until he tells you to go on.

1. Read chapters 14 through 16.8. They describe the accelerating movement towards the crucifixion, the crucifixion itself, and the events at the tomb between the women and the young man in white.
2. Look over the study aids (four pages with Mark 15.21-39 and Old Testament parallels). Careful use of this aid will help you to solve several difficulties which perplex those who are not aware of the importance of the Old Testament to Mark's account of the crucifixion.
3. In 15.23 they offer Jesus wine but he does not take it. Often people suppose that it is because he wants to be clear-headed to the end, and face his sufferings with his faculties intact. Why does Jesus refuse the wine?

He has already said he wouldn't drink it until the kingdom

comes in fullness.

4. In the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt, God visits 10 plagues upon the Egyptians. The last plague is the death of the first-born and the occasion of the Passover and the Exodus. What is the next-to-last plague? See Exodus 10.31.

Darkness

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5. How long does it last? 3 days
6. What happens in 15.33 and for how long? Darkness - 3 hours
7. Look at the readings in Amos which parallel verse 33. What is the event toward which these signs point?

Day of the Lord

8. The day of the Lord is the time when God brings his salvation to his people. It is also a day of judgment in which the Lord purifies his people, cleansing them of all their sins to make them ready. As Amos reminds us, it is not a lot of fun to have the Lord come, for we are shown up for the pretenders we really are.
 9. In 15.34 Jesus cries aloud. His words are a cry of dereliction.
 10. If God was in Christ, then (choose 1)
 - ☐ a. Jesus was mistaken. God did not forsake him.
 - ☐ b. Jesus was right and the God in him forsook his humanity, leaving it to suffer death.
 - ☒ c. Jesus was forsaken, even by God, but it was God the Son who was forsaken by God the Father.
 11. God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, faced abandonment, even by God, so that he might identify with the suffering of humanity, and of individual persons. We say in one of the prayers at Holy Communion "By his blood he reconciled us. By his wounds we are healed."
- For our sake, the Lord, our God, faced suffering and death; was subject to total abandonment and died. There was a death within God: the Son died in the flesh, suffering separation from all that all might be brought close; the Father suffered the loss of his only Son that he might not lose any of his children. Out of the suffering of God came the Holy Spirit, bringing healing and life to all who would accept God's offering of himself to us. Stop and pray, now, that you would be open and ready to accept this gift, that you would let God bring you close to him, comforting and cradling your whole self in him.
12. Read all of Psalm 22. This psalm begins with a cry of radical dereliction, but ends in a great hymn of praise.
 13. What does the psalmist predict as a consequence of what God is doing (in vv. 27-31)?

All the nations will come

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14. What does the gentile centurion confess in Mark 15.39?

truly this was God's son

15. The word for gentiles in Hebrew is 'goyim' and it is usually translated in the Old Testament as "the nations." Could this confession of the gentile centurion be an instance of "all the families (gentiles)" worshipping the Lord? See Psalm 22.27-28

Yes

16. We know that Mark frequently uses a piece of an Old Testament passage to point us to the whole thing. Is this what Mark is doing with these words from Psalm 22 on Jesus' lips?

Yes

17. Although the last words of Jesus in Mark are certainly a cry of abandonment, if they are seen as reminding us of the entire psalm, they are also a cry of

praise and hope.

18. This is because they point to a time when what shall happen?

God will bring all to himself

19. Do we have a role in bringing "all the families of the nations (to) worship before him?"

evangelism: bringing good news

The Resurrection

20. Read Mark 14.43-50. What verb is used three times to describe what they do to Jesus?

seize

21. Read 14.51-52. Who is following them? young man

22. What is he wearing? linen cloth (sindona)
(Note: the Greek word 'sindona' is usually translated 'shroud' and is the same word used to describe what they wrapped Jesus in in 15.46.)

23. They try to seize him, but he left the sindona and ran away naked.

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24. Read chapter 16. Is the tomb empty? no
25. Who is in the tomb (besides the women)? a young man
26. Where is he seated? on the right hand
27. What is he wearing? white robe
28. What happens to Jesus' clothing in 9.3 when he is transfigured?
white clothes
29. Where does the Lord sit according to the quotation in 12.36?
right
30. Where does the Son of Man sit in 14.62? right hand of Power
31. Why do we never recognize our Lord for who he is? Is it because we are looking for a dead body instead of a living Lord?
- Mark says, "You don't need to look for some fancy miracle in order to see the presence of the Lord. Now that you know the key: that he is right there in your midst, you can look at your life and realize that the resurrected Lord was there all along. And he is surely here now if we look for him where he said he was going. He is leading us into Galilee, the place where mission takes place, where there are those needing healing, cleansing and raising. Now we may follow, for he is alive!"

According to Mark
Session I
Leader's Guide

The Good News According to Mark
Mark 1.1-3.6

In this first session of our chapter-by-chapter study of the Gospel According to Mark we will look at four major section.

- 1.1-1.13 Prelude and overture (John the Baptizer)
- 1.14-1.34 Beginning of Jesus' ministry
- 1.35-1.45 A specimen day in the ministry of our Lord
- 2.1-3.6 Five stories of conflict

A careful examination of these opening characters will make what follows all the more intelligible. As with each of the lessons our intention is to establish a solid background in the way in which Mark makes his proclamation of the Good News so that further study on your own will be more profitable and so that students can become teachers of the Good News about Jesus Christ.

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *

* 1. How Jesus fits into the plan of salvation revealed in the *

* Old Testament. *

* 2. What the proper attitude and response of a disciple is. *

* 3. Who Jesus is and why he was rejected by the authorities. *

* * * * *

First, stop and pray: Lord, in the power of your Holy Spirit, convict me and convert me through the study of your Word.

1. Read Mark 1.1-3.6.

2. Review what you know about the words in the 1st verse:

The beginning: *Genesis 1.1 God initiates a new creation - salvation*

Good News: *Gospel*

Jesus: *"salvation"*

Christ: *Messiah - anointed*

God's Son: *obedience - election*

3. Recall what we studied about the Old Testament quotation in 1.2+3 (Malachi 3.1 and Isaiah 40.3). Why does it appear here? (What does it tell us about John and Jesus?) *It puts what happens in context of Old Testament expectations. John is Elijah, the one who comes before the Lord.*

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4. The church has long seen a trinitarian situation in 1.9-11. Spell it out in your own words:

*voice - God the Father
Jesus - God the Son
dove - God the Holy Spirit*

5. Mark 1.14-15 is a summary of Jesus' preaching. Put the "Good News from God" in your own words. (Use only what appears here as Jesus' words for your source.)

*time fulfilled
kingdom of God at hand
repent
believe in Good News*

6. The word "repent" stands for the Greek word "metanoite" which probably reflects Jesus' use of the Aramaic word "shubh." It means "return to God's way" or "turn around" from your involvement in the old world. In chapter 1 this demand of Jesus' is illustrated in part. Where?

Disciples turn from whatever they're doing and follow Jesus

7. Why was everyone looking for Jesus (1.37)? *Because of his reputation as miracle worker/healer*
8. Does it appear that he wants people to come to him for that reason?

No. He needs to "preach" the good news.

9. What does the posture and action of the leper in 1.40ff remind you of? What is its importance for us today?

*Worship - He kneels, beseeches him.
We come to Christ for healing in worship also.*

10. There are five stories of conflict in chapter 2 and the first six verses of chapter 3. List them below and describe for each of them a.) the point of the conflict, b.) with whom the conflict exists, and c.) Jesus' line of argument.

1. scribes	only God can condemn	is it easier to say walk or your sins are forgiven
2. scribes of the Pharisees	why eating with sinners tax-collectors	healthy don't need physician, but sick
3. John's disciples and Pharisees	fasting	bridegroom is here - no fasting - new wine, unshrunk cloth

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- | | | |
|--------------|--|---|
| 4. Pharisees | why doing what's unlawful
on Sabbath? | David and Abiathar
high priest
Son of Man is Lord
of Sabbath |
| 5. They | man of withered hand on
Sabbath | lawful to do good
or harm? |

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Session II
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Parables and Power
Mark 3.7-5.43

The fact that Our Lord taught in parables is fairly well-known. What a parable is is far less well-known. In the gospels we have a variety of literary and verbal devices to which the word "parable" is applied. They range from the short epigrammatic sayings to extensive stories (such as the Prodigal Son). In some of them the meaning is clear and they are meant to illustrate a teaching in the clearest and most vivid way possible. In the parables reported in Mark the intent is different. They are told enigmatically so as to cause the listener to stop and ponder...to struggle to get their meaning, and even to misunderstand.

This section also confronts us with three acts of power on the part of Jesus. Acts which are so dramatic in their scope that they demand a decision on our part...the decision of faith.

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *

* 1. About the Lord's teaching in parables, and that he knew he *

* would not be understood by many. *

* 2. Some characteristics out of the Kingdom. *

* 3. That Jesus is God present with his people in power. *

* * * * *

First, stop, pray: Forgive us, Father, when we do not see you present with us. Give us humble hearts so we might accept the power of your word.

1. Read chapter 4, especially the parables.
2. What does the Lord command us to do first in the parable of the sower?
Listen!
3. Summarize the message of the parable of the sower for the church.

You must sow

4. In what situation would this parable have been important to the disciples as a source of encouragement?

When they were not getting "results"--where their sowing of the message did not bring in a large harvest

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5. Does God want his creatures to see and perceive, hear and understand, turn and be forgiven? (See also Isaiah 6.9-10).
He allows us freedom to refuse. Seems as though he wills us to hardness of heart.
6. The Hebrew world view reflected in Isaiah 6 and in Mark 4.10-12 does not draw a clear distinction between what God wills and what he permits. In consideration of that fact and the statement in Mark 4.22, see if you would change your answer to question 5.
He allows us to refuse.
7. Why must we be careful how we regard others? (4.24)
What you give is what you get.
8. If the subject of Mark 4.25 is insight or discernment, what does the parable mean?
The more clearly you perceive the more you will receive in the way of understanding.
9. Does the man in 4.26-29 control what happens to what he sows?
No. It is in God's hands.
10. Can you make the faith of someone grow by persuasion or argument (or any other direct means)?
No.
11. For you to be a faithful witness to Jesus Christ, do you need to have immediate "results"?
No.
12. What does the parable of the mustard seed tell you about the importance of the things that you do in the name of Jesus Christ?
A tiny seed planted for Christ, tended by him, may become a great faith.
13. See Daniel 4.10ff and Ezekiel 17.22ff for more on the "birds of the air."
14. Read 4.35-5.43. There are three acts of power which only God could accomplish. List them. Describe what the situation is in each case and what Jesus does as a response.

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- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. 4.35 Storm arises threatening to capsize boat with Jesus and disciples. | 1. Jesus rebukes wind and waves. |
| 2. 5.22 Jairus' daughter dead | 2. Jesus raises her. |
| 3. 5.25 Woman with untreatable hemorrhage | 3. power goes out of Jesus -- she is healed. |

According to Mark
Session III
Leader's Guide

Jesus: God/Man
Mark 6.1-7.23

It was inevitable that people would not understand who Jesus was, for God intervening directly in human life is bound to be a disruptive event. What is more astonishing is that some did see through all the misunderstanding surrounding our Lord's sojourn among us to the truth of his presence. In chapter six we have the situation of his nature dealt with in the most direct manner. Read the section with a view to what it says about who Jesus is (God or human being), and also to the way in which people respond to him.

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *

* 1. That all expectations about God are too small and do not *

* encompass the truth...God's truth is always a surprise. *

* 2. That we share with Jesus his humanity. *

* 3. That Jesus shares with us his divinity. *

* * * * *

First, stop, pray: Let me listen, Lord. (and then be still for a time..)

1. Read Mark 6.1-7.23. What was the source of the astonishment in 6.2?

That the carpenter's son should speak with such authority.

2. Was the problem with how they thought Jesus should act, or with who they thought the Messiah should be?

Who they thought the Messiah should be.

3. What kind of a Messiah do you think they expected?

Power - mysterious mystical figure.

4. What kind of a Messiah was Jesus (in contrast)?

Human, real

5. The Lord does not always come to us in a majestic or supernatural way. Rather, most often he visits us in small things...in quietness or in the bustle of the everyday--for he is Lord of all of life--not just Lord of the high points. Think a little bit about the last time you were really made aware of the Lord...when were you last surprised by joy?

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6. In the sending out of the 12 (Mark 6.6-13) what was their most important resource? (by implication)

faith in Jesus

7. Read 1 Kings 18 and compare the story of Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel with Mark 6.14-29 (The story of John, Herod, and Herodias). What parallels do you see?
8. Every week the Lord sends us out to serve, bringing good news to those who don't have any and healing. In Mark 6.30-32, the apostles give us a model of how we may be prepared for further ministry each week. What should we do?

1. *Return to the Lord*

2. *Tell him all we have done and taught*

3. *Come away to a lonely place and rest a while*

9. When the disciples saw that it was late where they were gathered in the wilderness (6.30-44), what was their reaction?

Send the people to the cities to get food

10. What was Jesus' response? *You feed them*

11. Did they think they had enough resources to do what he demanded?

No

12. What happened when they brought all they had to Jesus?

It was transformed.

13. Mark 6.30-44. In Holy Communion there are four actions which are required in each celebration. (See Mark 14.22 and 1 Corinthians 11.23-24). They are

1. take (the bread) 2. bless (God) 3. break (the bread)
4. give (the bread)

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If you had to preach a homily on this incident what would you point out about this fact?

14. For Old Testament background on the feedings see Exodus 16, Numbers 11, and 1 Kings 4.42-44. These all show how Jesus fulfilled the expectation of abundance available at the coming of the messiah.

Exodus 16, I will rain bread from heaven.

Numbers 11, manna.

2 Kings 4.42, Elisha 100 men.

15. Mark 6.45-52. Who is Jesus? The disciples do not understand (6.52) but the reader can. The words translated "It is I" in Mark 6.50 mean literally "I am." See Exodus 3.14 and see what it means.

God present.

16. The gospels do not provide much support for anyone who wants to see Jesus as merely a "very good man and example" or to those who want to see only "God disguised as man." For Jesus is both God and man, inseparable, as the stories in this section point out. His hometown neighbors expect God to come in power and they are disappointed when they see the carpenter. The disciples think he is a fine rabbi and they are confronted with one who brings the fullness of the messianic age (when God comes to be with his people). "I am" himself is there....right there beside their little boat. (Write a meditation on the church as a boat using this story in 6.45-52.) How about us? Do you tend to minimize his humanity? Or his divinity? Spell out on the back who it is in whom you have your faith.

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Session IV
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Law and Grace
Mark 7.1-37

For the ancients Law was the key to life, for Law was instituted by God. Law was not simply a set of rules that must be kept (although there were literalists who tried to convince others it was so!). Law was a path, a way, by which humans might live in harmony with the created order. As early as the 8th century before Christ, God's prophets (Amos, Hosea) remind the people that it is the spirit of the Law (its intent) in which he is interested...not the letter only. That the people were unable through their own efforts to keep in step with God's intention is clear from the continued appeals of the prophets and finally by Jesus himself.

The coming of Jesus into history signals the fact that God had in his good time decided to provide a Way which was not dependent on faulty human will. He paved it himself through the offering of his Son on the cross...thereby changing the function of the Law. Jesus' teaching about the Law in Mark's gospel demonstrates that the whole basis of the law is changed. When God has entered human history in person a new avenue is presented and the old formulations of the law must yield to the active presence of God.

*
* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *
* 1. The Law has been transformed by God's presence in human life. *
* 2. The core of God's Law is devotion to him, not rituals or *
* rules. *
* 3. Because the distinction between clean and unclean is *
* demolished, the word is to be preached to the gentiles. *
* Ephesians 3.1-12 *
*

First, stop...pray in silence, listening for God's word (several minutes).

1. Before reading the lesson, write here what you know about Jesus and the Law.

2. Read the seventh chapter of Mark. Jesus accuses the Pharisees of ignoring the command of God and keeping instead the commands of men.

3. His example relates to things vowed to the temple. Moses said:

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Honor your father and mother

(Ex. 20.12; 21.17; Lev. 20.9; Dt. 5.16) but if someone makes a pledge to the temple of what he would have given to his parents in their old age he cannot be held to the law of Moses.

4. Jesus is saying that the Pharisees are pitting men's law which relates to temple worship again God's law which is concerned with relations between people.
5. How important is the distinction between "clean" and "unclean" in Jesus' saying? (Mark 7.14ff)

He makes the distinction irrelevant.

6. What would this argument say to those who would hold that the gospel is only for God's chosen people, the Jews, because gentiles do not maintain ritual cleanliness?

Cleanliness is not a matter of outward ritual, so all who are "circumcised in the heart" are heirs to God's promise.

7. Jesus denies that things have any inherent power, either for good or evil. Can you see any significance that Jesus' saying might have about the method of Baptism?

(sprinkling, pouring, immersing) method unimportant - amount of water or kind not important - attitude important

8. Immediately after this discussion of clean and unclean, Jesus goes where?

Tyre and (Sidon) Is this Jewish or X gentile territory?

9. For her saying the Syro-Phoenician woman is told to go home, her daughter is healed.
10. In Jesus' saying, who must first be fed? Israel
(Mark 7.27)
11. Does it imply that someone will be fed "second?" Yes
12. The Syro-phoenician woman was responding to Jesus' implied intention that the whole world would be fed. Summarize how the text shows that.

Your food (healing) is for all - so why not give some scraps now - even though the time isn't fulfilled for the gentiles.

---- One of the great stories of the Bible is the way in which God first

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chose a people and prepared a way for them through the wilderness... how he cared for them and made them his own. The new covenant which came to human life in Jesus shows how this care and concern was intended for the whole world, that all might share in the benefits and responsibilities of being God's Chosen People. God came and sought us out, even we who are gentiles and he will not let any perish.

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Bread and Sight
Mark 8

In the eighth chapter two great themes are presented. In the first, an account of a miraculous feeding and subsequent misunderstanding on the part of the disciples is used to show that Jesus demanded that his message be preached to all people, not only the Jews.

The second part includes the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida and Peter's confession and seems to suggest that the two incidents help to interpret each other. The second closes with a collection of sayings of Jesus on discipleship.

```

* * * * *
*
*   IN THIS LESSON: We learn
*   1. That the message of salvation is for all nations, gentiles
*      as well as Jews.
*   2. That Jesus is more than just the Christ, the one expected
*      by Israel.
*   3. That salvation is effected through God's suffering love in
*      Jesus.
*
* * * * *

```

First, stop. Pray: Lord, let your light shine into my heart.

1. Read Mark 8.1-39. Compare the feeding here with the one in Mark 6.35. In what respects are they the same? different?

5 loaves feed 5,000, leaving 12 baskets
7 loaves feed 4,000, leaving 7 baskets

2. How many baskets are left over after each of the feedings?

first 12 second 7

3. The reason the baskets of left-overs are taken up is so that those not at the feast will be able to be fed. What is the significance of the number 12 in the Old Testament?

Israel

4. Who does this imply will be fed from the left-overs in the first miraculous feeding?

Israel

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5. In Genesis 10 there is to be found "the table of nations." In it are 70 nations. In Acts 6.3, the Apostles choose 7 (number) helpers from the Greek-speaking community in Jerusalem.
6. In Acts 13.19 Stephen tells how the Israelites destroyed 7 gentile nations in Canaan.
7. What does this suggest (if anything) about who it is that the 7 baskets of left-overs are intended for?

Gentiles

8. What you have just noticed about the numbers associated with the miraculous feeding Jesus intends for the disciples to notice. To someone who might say (as the disciples did in the early church) "The message of salvation is for Jews. Gentiles must become Jews before they can become Christians," what would this say?
That is not true
9. Jesus' rebuke of the disciples for having eyes but not seeing, is followed by the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida. It is unique as a healing story because the healing takes place
in two parts.
10. There are numerous ways that we might understand this two-part healing of the blind man, but in no way did Mark intend that we think that Jesus didn't do it 'right' in the first place. For those of us who are children in the faith the temptation is to want God to do things on our timetable, which usually means we expect a complete answer now and anything less means that God isn't doing his part. To that attitude this gradual healing brings a word of rebuke.
11. Mark's placement of Peter's confession immediately after the story of the partial healing is deliberate. Does Peter understand fully who Jesus is? No What title does Peter use to describe who Jesus is? Christ. What title does Peter not understand in connection with Jesus? Son of Man
12. Let us return to verses 11-13. What is the Pharisees' over-riding intention? to test him What do they claim to seek? a sign from heaven Have they had a sign? yes
What is it? feeding in desert Read Numbers 11.

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Even after being fed by God in the desert, a wicked generation continued to demand from him a sign. The pharisees in Mark's story are heirs to the blindness of Moses' followers through their wicked refusal to see.

13. Chapter 8 ends with a number of sayings on discipleship which are similar in theme to the description of the Son of Man. In the space below and on the back reflect on the following:
 - a. What is my cross? Have I taken it up to follow Jesus?
 - b. Am I losing my life? or giving it away for Christ's sake?
 - c. Am I ashamed of him?
 - d. What is keeping me from giving myself completely to following him?

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The Transfiguration and A Healing by Prayer

There are several ways that the transfiguration of our Lord has been approached. One is to see it as a simple historical incident without much special significance except to show the divine side of Jesus. Another sees it as a displaced resurrection appearance, somehow got out of place and inserted here into the career of the earthly Jesus. A third metaphor of transfiguration to point to a deeper meaning of Jesus' presence among human beings. These are not mutually exclusive and the truth is probably to be found in the conjunction of the three.

The second incident is the healing of the boy with the dumb spirit. The historical facts of the situation have receded in this account to take a back seat to the theological interest of the evangelist to lift up the importance of faith, its multi-leveled growth, and the power of Jesus available to those who call upon him and give themselves to him.

Here we also have the second prediction of the passion and resurrection and the identification of Jesus with the Son of Man; the discussion about who shall be first and greatest (in John's gospel this saying occurs with the foot-washing at the last supper); and a saying on the proper way to deal with other denominations, along with a series of teachings on faith and a new way of understanding ethical behavior.

*
* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *
* 1. Jesus is more than an Old Testament prophet or leader, he is *
* the Son of God. *
* 2. Wholeness comes not through our own efforts but through faith *
* in Christ. *
* 3. The way of wholeness (healing) is through suffering and faith, *
* and we must not mislead persons about the nature of the *
* Christian faith. *
*

First, stop and pray that God will let you know him more closely through this lesson.

1. Read the ninth chapter of Mark. Notice that the first verse belongs properly to chapter 8. It says that the Kingdom of God will come when?
2. a. When does the transfiguration happen (9.2)? After 6 days
- b. Find a map of the region around Galilee. What mountain is

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- there? none
- c. Jesus takes 3 people with him. Peter, and James
and John.
- d. These last two are brothers. (relationship)
- e. Once on the mountain what happens to Jesus?
transformed, bright clothes white
- f. A voice comes out of a cloud, and says
This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.
- g. What does Peter want to build? tents
3. In Exodus 24.17,
- a. How long was Moses on the mountain before the Lord spoke? 6 days
- b. What mountain is he on? Sinai
- c. Moses takes three people (who are named) with him. They are
Aaron and Nadab and Abihu, who are brothers.
- d. In Exodus 34.19,30, when Moses comes down with the tablets of the
testimony, what has happened to his face?
shines
- e. The Lord calls to Moses out of a cloud.
- f. According to Exodus 25.9 what is the subject of the Lord's
discussion with Moses? the tent of meeting
4. Could it be that Mark's account of the transfiguration owes
something to this story from Exodus? What? The thing that comes out
of this comparison of the similarities is the startling way that the
story is different. Just when we expect an affirmation of the com-
parison between Jesus and Moses, the voice from the cloud says Jesus
is the Son, the Beloved
5. When Jesus descends from the mountain, he finds that the disciples
are unable to cast out a demon. What does he call them in 9.19?
faithless generation

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6. What does Moses find when he comes down off the mountain the first time? Are the people waiting faithfully for his return?

(Exodus 32.9) no

7. Compare Numbers 14.11 with the statement of chastisement in Mark 9.19. What do you notice?

9.19

14.11

How long am I to be with you

How long will this people despise us

How long am I to bear with you

How long will they not believe in me

8. According to Jesus what was lacking on the part of the disciples? (see 9.23)

faith

9. What kind of faith? Faith in what? *Jesus/confessional faith*

10. Why couldn't the disciples cast it out? *needed prayer*

11. Summarize below the subjects of the teaching section which begins on the road to Capernaum. Also describe the main point of each saying:

Son of man delivered

kill rose in 3 days

Who was the greatest - first must be last

child - whoever receives him in my name receives me

not again us is for us

cup of water will not lose reward

cause a little one to sin

cut off hand

salt

Chapter Ten

Chapter 10 is particularly interesting because of its relationship to the book of Deuteronomy and its laws. It is as though Jesus were setting out a little commentary on the fifth book of the Bible in his actions and teachings here (as in fact he is.) It would be profitable to recall St. Paul's reflections on the Law while reading this chapter, for it is similar in many respects.

*
* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *
* 1. That Jesus considers the protection of the poor, the defense- *
* less, and the oppressed to be of primary importance. *
* 2. That Christians follow a Way which includes suffering and even *
* death, just as our Lord. *
* 3. That faith does not go unrewarded. *
*

I hope that you have been approaching this study with prayer as a guide. Before you answer any questions pray quietly that God will help your understanding, and then read slowly through the chapter. Take time to mull over everything which strikes you or which does not yield right away to your understanding.

1. This teaching in Mark 10.1-12 is a good example of how the cultural situation makes a difference in the significance of a biblical passage. Would it make a difference in your understanding of this teaching if you knew that in Jesus' day a woman was considered to be property, and the husband had a right to send the woman away for any reason? Since women could not own property or make contracts, an unmarried woman might be literally in danger of starving unless she became a prostitute. Compare the usual way of understanding this passage with one which takes into consideration the cultural context.

Jesus is protecting rights of women.

2. The story of the children coming to Jesus is frequently treated in a sentimental, romantic way. Read Deuteronomy 24. Who does it declare to be the concern of the Lord?

Poor and aliens

3. Thus the children might be seen as those who are (check one)
 - ☐ a. naive and innocent
 - ☐ b. young
 - ☒ c. powerless and poor
 - ☐ d. other (specify)

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4. Read the story of the man with great possessions (10.17-22). He is the ancient counterpart of the persons today who say, "If people would just keep the ten commandments, then we would have heaven on earth." How does this story relate to the saying about the children?

Wealth and comfort get in the way of salvation

5. Why is it so hard for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom?

It gets in the way - serve two masters

6. Verse 31 summarizes this section and leads into the third foretelling of the passion. What promise does Jesus make to those who are willing to give up their craving to be first in this world?

They will be first in the kingdom of God

7. What are those who follow Jesus into Jerusalem experiencing? (10.32)

amazement and fear

8. What emotions are expressed by those who come to the tomb in chapter 16? The women are amazed and the young man says to them, "do not be amazed." They say nothing to anyone because they are afraid. Do you think that Mark's choice of these words here is accidental?

This fear is awe in the face of the divine

9. In Jesus' response to James and John's request for status, what do the cup and baptism represent?

Suffering and death

10. In Joshau 2, as they prepare to enter into the Promised Land, the two spies sent to the town of Jericho stay with a harlot named Rahab. Her faith in the promises of the Lord to his people results in her and her family being saved. In the story of blind Bartimaeus Jesus is on his way down to Jerusalem and they enter Jericho. When the blind man is healed, Jesus says, "Because of your faith you have been saved." (The same Greek word can be translated either saved or made whole.)
11. In Aramaic the word "bar" means "son of." What is funny about the name of the blind man and the description of his parentage?

*Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus is also
Bartimaeus Bartimaeus or
Son of Timaeus, son of Timaeus*

Promises, Faith, and Authority

It may be possible to understand how to read Mark from seeing how he handles the material which comes to him. An example might be found in the parable of the sower (Mark 4). We know from other sources that the parables were probably told at first with two purposes: 1. to illustrate a single, major idea; and 2. to be as clear as possible, using the experiences of the listeners for raw material. In time the parables came to be fixed in form (from continuous re-telling) and their significance expanded. They assumed an allegorical quality and the details of the parable were given specific meanings. As the tellers became further removed from the living situation of rural Palestine, the assumption grew that the parables had a mysterious purpose and that they demanded a secret information not commonly available. It is this stage of their development which is reflected in Mark's treatment of the parable of the sower with its allegorical interpretation.

If Mark handles other materials as he handles the parables, then we might be benefited by looking at some of his stories for their allegorical significance, asking to what theological purpose is Mark putting the stories in his gospel.

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* * * * *
*
*   IN THIS LESSON: We focus on
*   1. God's promises to the Jews and the reason they have been
*       expanded to include the Gentiles.
*   2. The power of faith, and the necessity of forgiveness.
*   3. The opposition to Jesus and a God's-eye view of its
*       significance.
*
* * * * *

```

First, take a moment. Don't rush into this. The answers aren't important. What is important is your intention to seek God and him only. Pray silently for a moment affirming your desire to encounter the living Lord in this chapter of the Word.

1. Read Mark 11.1-10. Compare it with Zechariah 9.9 and 14.4. To what event do these prophecies point? How has Mark used his allusions to these prophecies?

*The arrival of the Messiah
To demonstrate Jesus=Messiah*

2. How does Jesus know that a colt such as he describes will be waiting? (do not guess; seek an answer, if there is one, in the text)

miraculous - unexplained

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3. Does Mark have the great crowds welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem as Matthew, Luke and John do? (see Matthew 21.9, Luke 19.37-38, and John 12.12-13)

No, just those accompanying Jesus.

4. The people bless both the one who comes and the kingdom of our father David which is coming. (Note: possibility festival of Succoth here implied 6 nights before Passover.)
5. We have learned in the course of this study that (a) Mark wants to explain why the promises to the Jews have been passed to the gentiles, and (b) he uses 'sandwiches' (the interpolation of a section of written material between the two halves of another incident) to encourage the reader to use each of the incidents to interpret the other.

Here's the bonus question:

What is Mark saying in the 'sandwich' of the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple? 11.12-11.21. You might look at these questions to help get to the big one:

1. Who or what does the fig tree represent? *Israel*
2. What is a robber's den? *place where robbers go to count up the spoils*
3. Who are "all peoples"? *Gentiles and Jews*
4. Who is the temple for? *Jews*
5. What is the significance of bearing or not bearing fruit? *faith*
6. In these apothegms of Jesus how powerful is faith? What is faith for? *Mark 11.22ff.*

Can do anything.

7. What is the intention of the story about the challenge to Jesus' authority in its present setting? Does it simply show that Jesus is cleverer than his opponents or is there more? *Mark 11.27-33.*

To show how the chief priests, scribes and elders did not have faith and to prepare for parable of the wicked tenants, ties together the two sections.

8. In the light of what we have said about Mark's handling of the parables, distinguish between the probable original import of the story of the wretched tenants and the importance it has for Mark's time.

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Originally a story of how humans are unreceptive to God. In Mark's hands it becomes a story of how God is forced to give his salvation to the Gentiles.

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Mark 12.13-13.37

This week we look at two major sections: a controversy section in which Jesus faces a number of questioners and deals with the questions of tribute to the Roman authorities; the nature of the resurrection; the greatest commandment, and the Davidic lineage of the Messiah. He warns against hyper-piety for show and illustrates by an example the nature of real piety.

The second section is found in chapter 13 and is sometimes called the little apocalypse. It is introduced by the prediction of the fall of the Temple and continues with predictions about the last days, including the persecutions which the disciples will face and the predictions of the coming of the Son of Man in glory. It ends with the exhortation to "Watch!" for we do not know when the Master will come.

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We see *

* 1. Jesus revealing a way of approaching life and a style of *

* theological reflection. *

* 2. Some key teachings of Jesus interpreted by the early church. *

* 3. How to deal with those who try to promote a date for the end *

* of history. *

* * * * *

As you pray through this lesson, ask two questions: what is Mark saying about Jesus, and what does he have to say to me?

1. Read Mark 12.13-17. What is God's and what is Caesar's?

Everything is God's. What God gives him is Caesar's.

2. Read Mark 12.18-27. Summarize how Jesus argues for the resurrection.

Since God is God of living and not of dead, because we say he is God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they must not be dead, but resurrected.

3. Read Mark 12.28-34. What is significant about a scribe responding to Jesus' statement that he was 'not far' from it?

Not all Jews in opposition to Jesus' teaching. He was not quite there--did not recognize Jesus as the promised one.

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4. Read Mark 12.35-37. What does Jesus say about the claim that the Messiah would be an heir of David's?

not necessarily so.

5. Read Mark 12.38-44. This is a warning against those who: *scribes and rich people who make outward show of respectability.*

What comment does it make about outward respectability?

not enough

6. Compare Jesus' saying in Mark 12.44 with John Wesley's dictum: 'Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.'

7. Read Mark 13.1-27. Does it seem to encourage those who look for signs of the end or discourage them?

discourage those who look for signs.

8. Summarize the main points of Jesus' discourse here:

13.1-4 *Introduction - prediction of fall of Temple*

13.5-13 *Don't be led astray by false messiahs, you will be persecuted, but strengthened by Holy Spirit*

13.14-23 *Flee when desolating sacrilege--will be bad but could be worse.*

13.24-27 *Cosmic dimension*

9. Read Mark 13.28-37. Does this section seem to encourage those who look for signs of the end or not? *Encourage looking for signs--but discourage "calendarizing"*

10. Summarize the main points of Jesus' sayings here:

Watch and don't be fooled, trust in God.

Mark 14.1-14.41

We have come to the Passion and Crucifixion of our Lord. It is special in several respects which should become apparent as we go through it.

In our consideration of the Passion we will not focus our questions on the specific incidents to the extent which we have done so thus far in our story of Mark's gospel. Rather, it is important to get a feel for the rhythm and movement of the passion and crucifixion accounts. They ought to become a part of you and you a part of them. You are encouraged to read chapters 14 and 15 straight through several times without analyzing what you read, simply noticing what occurs to you each time through. Make your reading your prayer and pray these chapters.

1. Do that now and place whatever observations come to you here before reading further in the assignment:

2. Did you notice anything about the time sequence which is portrayed? The special notations of time? How long does the whole passion and crucifixion take?

3 days - possible liturgical setting for telling the story

3. What is the tone of the whole account? How is it developed?

Somber--impending tragedy and inexorable movement--by the time demarcations and the rhythm of the account

Answer the last two questions on the back:

4. What are the incidents which stand out in the passion and crucifixion? List them in order and summarize what Mark has to say about how and why Jesus died and what it means. (read Psalm 22 also.)
5. What does it mean to you that Jesus was betrayed into the hands of the authorities and crucified?

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The Resurrection
Mark 15.42-16.8

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the event which constitutes Christianity. Without the resurrection, Paul says, then our faith is in vain and our hope is in vain. Mark does not attempt to give the 'evidence' of the resurrection in the way we usually think of evidence. He gives the meaning of the resurrection and the effect of it, which is evidence enough for those who live in Christ. When we live in him then we experience the power of his raising again to life, and know it as a present reality and not only an historical event. As you read these few verses--first the somber and moving story of Joseph of Arimathea, and then the encounter of the women with the young man in the tomb--let them move in you. Pray that the living Lord will reveal himself to you.

The following questions are essentially the same as those from session D which relate to the same verses.

* * * * *

* IN THIS LESSON: We learn *
* that he who they tried to kill conquered death, and that we shall *
* find the Lord going on ahead of us as we seek to serve him. *
* * * * *

1. Read Mark 14.43-50. What verb is used three times to describe what they do to Jesus?

seize

2. Read Mark 14.51-52. Who is following them? *a young man*
What is he wearing? *linen cloth sindona*
They try to seize him, but he left the shroud and escaped
naked.

3. Read chapter 16, verses 1-8. Is the tomb empty? *no*
Who is in the tomb (besides the women)? *young man*
Where is he seated? *right side*
What is he wearing? *sindona*

4. What happens to Jesus' clothing in Mark 9.3 when he is transfigured?

turns white

Where does the Lord sit (according to 12.36)? *right side*

Where does the Son of Man sit in 14.62? *right side*

What is the reaction of the women to his words in 16.8? *afraid*

APPENDIX C

Mark's Use of the Old Testament in the Crucifixion Narrative

Mark's Use of the Old Testament in the Crucifixion Narrative¹

In the pages which follow we will examine in detail Mark's use of Old Testament materials in his account of the crucifixion of Jesus. In the process we will see how he makes use of a variety of Old Testament materials, and the various uses to which he puts them. We shall seek to find how this may illumine a study of Mark's gospel, and if it makes his intentions more accessible to modern readers or hearers of the gospel. This study is limited by the extent of the pericope which we are studying, but it still may have important insights for the rest of the gospel.

The particular section with which we are concerned begins with the impressment of Simon the Cyrenian to carry the cross of Jesus (15.21), and ends with the confession of the centurion that "this man was truly God's son." (15.39) It might be argued that the pericope really begins with 15.16 when, for the first time, it is clearly the soldiers who are the actors (they are introduced at that point). In verse 21 the subject "they" is included in the verb and clearly implies the soldiers, who are continuing the action begun five verses earlier. Against this it may be pointed out that it is equally clear that another location and a new activity (crucifixion) is begun, completing the mocking which is the primary interest of the previous section. Although this section is tied closely with that which it follows, it

¹Originally written by Douglas Riddle for Dr. Edward Hobbs, July 28, '976, at the School of Theology at Claremont.

also stands on its own as a complete piece. Verses 40-41, concerning the women, stand as a transition to the empty crypt scene, although they have been added onto the end of this section.

Within this pericope Mark uses the Old Testament in each of the three ways he uses it elsewhere in his gospel: in direct quotation, allusion, and general reference or influence.¹ When Mark uses a direct quotation it serves the purpose of directing our attention to a particular Old Testament passage. Most frequently the statement quoted stands for the larger text in which it stands and this fact suggests that the context in which it stood--when Mark used it as a source--is as important as the meaning of the quotation alone. Allusions to Old Testament motifs are also important in Mark's construction. He often uses numbers, and individual words and phrases to point to particular Old Testament passages. Examples are to be found in the numbers connected with the feedings (the number of baskets used to gather up the left-over pieces in each of the two feedings, 12 and 7 respectively) and in the use of the word 'peirazō' for the temptation of Jesus in 1.12-13, which points to the 'testing' of Israel in the wilderness. The third use to which Mark puts Old Testament materials is a more general one. This includes such things as the Exodus pattern which is duplicated in the early chapters of the gospel. He does not appear to rely as heavily upon such use of Old Testament motif or structure in this account (although see the unresolved questions on the next-to-last page). In the verse-by-verse commentary which follows, we will see in

¹ John H. Reumann, "Psalm 22 at the Cross," Interpretation, XXVIII, (1974), p. 40.

specific how these serve to interpret the death by crucifixion of Jesus, introduced to us in the first verse of the gospel as the Son of God.

The pericope begins with the continued action on the part of the soldiers (here identified only by the use of the third person, plural form of the verb). That it is connected with what has preceded is indicated by the use of the connective 'kai' and the lack of further identification of the subject of the sentence. We learn that they impress (RSV 'compel') a passerby, Simon the Cyrenian, to carry the cross of Jesus. There is no mention of whether this man was gentile or Jew, and although the commentators either ignore the question or assume that he was probably a Jew,² Mark identifies him as coming from Cyrene, in North Africa; and his children (Alexander and Rufus) have gentile names. If he is indeed "coming in from the field" rather than in from the "country" on the first day of Passover, it would seem likely that Mark is telling us that it is a gentile who first (literally) carried a cross following Jesus.

The location of the crucifixion is then set out and identified: Golgotha, which Mark translates for us, the place of a Skull. This is followed in verse 23 by an offer to Jesus of wine mingled with myrrh. If Nineham is right, the subject of this sentence is unspecified women or a woman of Jerusalem. He says that they were accustomed to offer condemned criminals "drugged wine in order to dull their sensibilities

² Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), p. 588; Eduard Schweizer, The Good News According to Mark (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1970), p. 345; D. E. Nineham, The Gospel of St. Mark (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 422.

and so alleviate their sufferings."³ This is in accord with Proverbs 31.6: "Give strong drink to him who is perishing and wine to those in bitter distress." The commentators agree that Jesus refuses the wine in order to maintain an unclouded mind to the end. This, of course, clearly ignores the fact that only a chapter before (14.25) Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." This will also apply to the offer of vinegar a few verses hence. Whether Mark is concerned with Jesus' clear mind or not, he is certainly not disposed to say here that Golgotha hill is the kingdom of God, which would be the effect of Jesus' acceptance of wine.

The awful deed is not described, only indicated: "And they crucify him." Most commentators are more than willing to supply all the information which Mark has not, complete with types of crosses and procedures, and medical descriptions of the suffering of crucified persons. We must assume that Mark thought his readers already knew about crucifixion. He is not interested in much more than the simple fact of crucifixion. His concern is with what happens as it reveals God's purposing.

"And they divide his garments among them, casting lots for them" is very close to Psalm 22.18 (LXX 21.19), and it does direct our attention to the psalm, contrary to Taylor.⁴ He calls the practice "natural" and therefore not necessarily dependent upon the psalm (although he admits that Mark may have had it in mind). In fact, as we shall see

³Nineham, p. 423.

⁴Taylor, p. 589.

throughout this pericope, Mark has not used such citations in an incidental way. Schweizer thinks that Mark uses the psalm here to indicate the fulfillment of the scripture.⁵ Reumann's summary of Suhl's contention concerning Mark's use of Old Testament materials is instructive in response to this notion. He rightly points out that Mark is not interested in 'fulfillment of prophecy' so much as 'agreement with scripture' or conformity with scripture.⁶ Mark is interested in showing how this horrible thing is fully within God's provenance, and that God's salvation in Jesus is not a brand new kind of salvation, but is in fact the way God always works.

"And it was the third hour" is the first of the three time references in the crucifixion scene. These have been used by some to support the idea that the gospel was written in Rome and reflects here the liturgical practice of the Roman church.⁷ The three-fold derision of verses 29-32 is also cited in support of this contention. It is tied together with the repetition of the statement of crucifixion. Together with 15.20 and 15.24 this is the third 'crucify' connected with Jesus in this pericope.

Over his head they place this charge, "The King of the Jews": a phrase which has taken on the strength of a litany by this point. This is the fifth time that this phrase has been used of Jesus by those who oppose him, beginning with the question of Pilate in 15.2, "Are you the King of the Jews?" We will hear it echoed one more time in the mocking

⁵Schweizer, p. 346.

⁶Reumann, pp. 42-43.

⁷Nineham, p. 424.

of the passersby in verse 32. In reading these scenes aloud, the phrase begins to contribute to the rising tension of the narrative. Each time it is used its sense is more and more disparaging until it is transformed in the crucifixion itself, issuing in the confession of verse 39.

"And with him they crucify two robbers, one on his right and one on his left." This does not seem to be a quotation, but Mark is here alluding to the servant song of Isaiah 53.12: "Because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." This passage also serves to interpret the words connected with the cup of wine in the institution of the eucharist (14.24): "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." Each of these emphasizes the importance of his suffering and death for the work of salvation.

With verse 29 the three-fold derision of Jesus on the cross now begins. The first two instances are accompanied by a phrase or phrases which specify the content of the mocking. The first group to deride him are the passersby who act fully in accord with Psalm 22.6-7: "All who see me mock at me, they make mouths at me, they wag their heads." We also hear Psalm 109.25 here: "I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me they wag their heads." The language is expressly that of Lamentations 2.15, especially the description of the passersby. They pick up the accusation which would not hold up in the assembly of the chief priests, elders, and scribes, demanding that he who claimed he could tear down (*kataluō*) the temple, come down (*katabainō*) from the cross. The demand that he save himself reflects

Psalm 22.29c, with its implication that "he...cannot keep himself alive." Psalm 69 is also strongly in the background here.

Since we shall run into Psalm 69 later, it might be useful to notice that its use would suggest more than simply the current derision of Jesus on the cross. Its language would serve to remind the person hearing it of the account of the cleansing of the temple in the opening of the Jerusalem section. Mark 11.15-18 reads much like an exposition of Psalm 69.9: "For zeal for thy house has consumed me, and the insults of those who insult thee have fallen on me." If we were not sufficiently reminded of its significance in chapter 11, he has surely brought it to mind in the account of the crucifixion.

The second group to join in are the chief priests, who mock him to one another and to the scribes. Taylor points out the oddity of their presence at this strange fest,⁸ and Nineham considers their presence unlikely in the extreme.⁹ Their insult reflects the thinking of Wisdom 2.17-20: "Let us see if what he says is true. Let us see what kind of an end he himself will have. If the virtuous man is God's son, God will take his part and rescue him from the clutches of his enemies. Let us test him with cruelty and torture and thus explore this gentleness of his and put his endurance to the proof. Let us condemn him to a shameful death since he will be looked after--we have his word for it."

We have no information given about what the words of "those who were with him crucified" were in their derision, but the point is well made that there is by this time none who have not abandoned and rejected

⁸Taylor, p. 591f.

⁹Nineham, p. 425.

him. The whole cast of characters is completely at odds with Jesus, and the stage is set.

Verse 33 begins with the statement of time "And when the sixth hour had come," and portrays a great darkness which covers the earth (or land) until the ninth hour. Mark has been building up to this point, systematically readying us for a remarkable event, and with this portent we understand what is coming. It is the long-promised day of the Lord. The Old Testament references for this darkness are many. They begin with the Exodus account of Moses' encounter with Pharaoh for the liberation of his people (Exodus 10.21), where Moses makes darkness to stretch over Egypt for three days (compare with three hours), pointing to a new Exodus which is about to occur. The richness of this image has been heightened through its use in the prophetic literature as an element of the day of the Lord. Amos 8.9 is suggested here: "On that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon (the sixth hour) and darken the earth in broad daylight." and 8.10: "I will make it like mourning for an only son." must be a prelude to the centurion's confession. Related to these are Amos 5.18 and Isaiah 13.9; 50.3. Clearly what is presaged is the present judgment and coming of the Lord.¹⁰

What happens? "At the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" Just when we expect to hear of God's exercise of sovereign power, we have a radical cry of dereliction. This saying on the lips of Jesus has caused untold problems for the faithful, which

¹⁰ See especially 13.24.

they have solved in various ways. Luke sees fit to lose it altogether, substituting "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (Luke 21.46) John, similarly leaves out the reference (assuming he heard of it), ending with the more dignified "It is finished." (John 19.30) This phrase in Jesus' mouth is the first verse of Psalm 22, and as Reumann has observed, "The early church rightly saw the entire psalm intended."¹¹

We have seen how Mark will cite an Old Testament text or make allusion to it, and in so doing, point to the whole context in which it is set in the canon. This practice is most effectively used here. Mark portrays the stark abandonment of Jesus in this moment, and at the same time interprets the situation of the crucifixion in such a manner that we understand it to be victory rather than failure. What is (on the surface) the end, is understood to be the proclamation of God's sovereignty and fully in accord with his saving acts in previous history.

Mark's citation of this psalm would immediately draw the attention of one familiar with it, to the whole psalm, which bears several thoughts dear to Mark's exposition of the Good News. First, it is a psalm of thanksgiving for God's saving acts, perhaps offered in the temple upon the occasion of the individual's deliverance from threatened peril.¹² Verses 1-21 of the psalm recount in stylized language the crisis and destruction which he had faced, after which comes rejoicing, praise, and the confession which he will continue to

¹¹Reumann, p. 49.

¹²Ibid., p. 46.

make as testimony.¹³ Second, it affirms Mark's contention that "the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord" who "rules over the nations." (verses 27,28) We shall see at the end of the crucifixion narrative how Mark interprets this verse. Third, it affirms in the midst of the dark of the crucifixion that God is lord both of the living and the dead, and of life itself.¹⁴

In verse 35 we are reminded of the beginning of the gospel, when some of the bystanders misunderstand the cry¹⁵ to be an appeal for Elijah. The response of the bystander in running to get some vinegar on a sponge reflects the bitter phrase from Psalm 69.21: "They gave me poison for food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." We see here how Mark weaves his Old Testament foundations together, and continues to use them to interpret the story of Jesus' death. We mentioned in connection with the derision section how Psalm 69 played an important part in the background of those verses. Here it emerges into the foreground and Mark explicitly calls us to it.

As the bystander offers the sponge to Jesus, we are faced with the fact not only of the misunderstanding of Jesus' words, but the total misunderstanding of his situation. The person hearing the gospel recalls, as a result of this saying, something which Jesus has already affirmed in 9.12-13: Elijah has already come, as a careful reading of 1.4ff would indicate. Those who wait for Elijah have missed the boat

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Although there are some difficulties with the translation of verse 29.

¹⁵ Nineham, p. 429, discusses the absurdity of the misunderstanding if we were confronted with an historical account.

as well as the point. It is not clear in what way this is a commentary on Jewish expectations that the Messiah had not yet come, but it seems to bear a strong criticism of those who wait for Elijah at that late date.

Verse 37 completes the death of Jesus, as he "uttered a loud cry and expired." This second cry is not expressed in words and seems nearly anti-climactic to the business which has gone before. A few more suggestions may be in order which apply to the cry. Psalm 31-22 may lie behind the intention of this account, "I had said in my alarm, 'I am driven far from thy sight.' But thou didst hear my supplications when I cried to thee for help." It describes the action which has occurred already, to the extent that Jesus' cry of dereliction in verse 34 is the same in content as this from Psalm 31. Psalm 31 is not the only place where we find a 'cry' which is suggested by this verse. In Exodus 2.23 the sons of Israel's cry (*Boē*, in the LXX a noun form of the verb *Boaō* which is what Jesus is described as doing) rises to God from their bondage in Egypt. The result of their cry is given in Psalm 22.5: "To thee they cried and were saved." The result of the cry is implied in the weight given to the language of Psalm 22, which issues in verse 24 as an affirmation that "He has not hid his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him."

With Jesus' death, the salvation which was for the house of Israel is now open to "all the nations," for we hear in verse 38 that "the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom." The speculation of commentators as to which of the two veils in the temple it might be--that dividing the Holy of Holies from the sanctuary (Exodus 26.31-35; 36.35-38) or that dividing the sanctuary from the

first courtyard--is not very important for the intention of Mark. Nineham point out that it may suggest the removal of any barrier between Jew and gentile (as in Ephesians 2.14).¹⁶

Following the rending of the veil in the temple, the centurion who stood facing Jesus and saw him breathe his last, says "Truly this man was God's son." It is not that the centurion knows that the veil is rent which allows him to make this confession, but rather as the veil is torn in two, it is possible for the *goyim* to recognize who Jesus is in his death. God's Shekinah has left its dwelling in the temple. In this way Mark provides an exposition of Psalm 22.27,28: "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before him." "For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations." In this saying attributed to the centurion we come full circle in the gospel which began with the words "The beginning of the Gospel of the Son of God..." What follows is the beginning of something new, but (in Mark's thinking) not unexpected.

In summary we may observe that Mark has made intensive and significant use of Old Testament materials in his narration of the crucifixion. His purpose in this was to demonstrate that what happened to Jesus was far from an unforeseen disaster, but rather the expected suffering and death of one who brings salvation through his very death. Particularly in the use of Psalm 22 and other of the psalms, Mark has demonstrated that what has occurred is a part of God's purposing. Further, it is now his purpose that the promises to Israel have now been extended to the gentiles who have responded in faith.

¹⁶Nineham, p. 430.